

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "Dams Durden," "My Lord Conceil,"
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHEEP REJECTS THE FOLD.

It seemed to Gretchen that she had lived through years of suffering when, at last, some sense of consciousness came back to her.

The room was dark—the fire had long since died out. Her numbed and shivering frame seemed scarcely capable of obeying her will, as with a supreme effort she raised herself from the couch, and dragged her limbs across the room. Her hand was on the door—she had it partly open, when the sound of voices speaking in the hall roused her attention.

Something familiar in the tones of one struck sharply on her senses, and fear, and wonder, and terror quickened her numbed brain into action. She was in the hall in an instant, and facing the two dark and sombre figures who had been parleying with the old serving-woman.

As the light fell on her face and figure they stood as if transfixed, and relief and terror seemed to hold her by turns, as her faltering tongue gave faltering welcome—a welcome that received no response.

The door of the little front parlour was open; lights were there and a fire. Instinctively Gretchen led the way thither, and they followed.

The door closed, and they turned and faced her as judges face an accused and guilty prisoner. Appealingly she stretched out her hands.

"Aunt!" she cried, amazed and fearful.

Then, relapsing into the old, familiar tongue, she went on: "How did you find me? And now, oh, I want you! I want you! You will forgive me, and take me home, will you not?"

But the beautiful, stern face never changed. It seemed as if words would not come. Then the second figure stepped forward, and threw back the long, shrouding veil. It was Sister Maria.

"Oh, miserable girl," she cried, "well may you need us! Dearly have you paid for your folly!"

Gretchen shrank back, pale and appalled. "You!" she faltered.

"Yes; even I. When at last we learnt where you were, I resolved to accompany your aunt to England. Your sin has killed the good old man, whose roof sheltered you. He died, holding your name accursed——"

"Ah, no!" cried Gretchen wildly. "Don't tell me—that; you break my heart."

"It is true," said the Sister relentlessly, "and it is your work. Terrible has been your sin. You are accursed, and a thing of shame and reproach in men's eyes! Nay, do not speak. We know all your miserable tale, down to this day's incident, when the man, for whom you sacrificed your hopes of Heaven, has cast you aside like a broken toy. We have waited and watched for this hour, knowing it would come, as surely as the day brings the sun. Seven months ago you left the roof that had sheltered, the love that had guarded you, the service to which you were vowed. The history of your sin, and of its punishment, is written on your face. You bear its curse within you—a brand of living shame will sear your life, and turn its every hour to misery. Wilful, disobedient,

criminal, so you stand now in sight of Heaven and man—a thing at which the virtuous shudder, and which all men will mock at and despise!”

Like one transfixed, the girl stood and listened to that fierce denunciation. Not at first, not all at once, did its full and terrible meaning flash upon her brain; but gradually a sickening horror, a dull throb of heart and pulse, the consciousness of a secret but recently learnt, stole through her startled mind.

She looked from one to the other of the stern and unmoved faces, and a great fear and terror leapt into her eyes. She sank on her knees and hid her face from sight.

“I sinned, I know,” she faltered; “but it was in ignorance and in love—and Heaven is merciful. It will pardon. Oh, cannot you forgive me too? You do not know what I have suffered.”

“Your suffering,” said her judge, “is but just. As for pardon, it is for you to earn it. The Church you forsook will still open her arms to you, if you turn to her in penitence. The shelter from which you fled will still receive you, if meekly and humbly you confess your sin, and accept its penance. Your shame may be concealed, and its reproach removed; but all the years of your life must atone for it. The world and you have done with each other from this hour!”

Those harsh and condemnatory words stabbed Gretchen's heart with sharp but salutary pain. This self-appointed judge had overstepped the limits of the girl's own consciousness of wrong. Her soul and spirit sprang up in rebellion, and for a moment lent her brief strength and brief forgetfulness.

“I will not go back with you!” she cried. “Aunt is different, I owe her my duty; but to you and your Church I owe nothing but misery! It was your harshness and cruelty that drove me from my home, that left me so defenceless. I will not return with you, or join your Sisterhood, even to hide what you call my shame. I have been cruelly deceived; but my ignorance and helplessness were alone to blame, and they are the faults of my bringing-up. I believed, until to-day, that I was Neale Kenyon's wife. To-day only I have learned the truth, and—and I must suffer for my folly in trusting a man's love and a man's promises. But that is a matter for myself alone. You have no right, and no power, to force me to resume the chains I once so willingly broke.”

“This is blasphemous!” exclaimed

Sister Maria. “Has he, then, made you a heretic, to add to his crimes? Do you know what you are saying? Your folly and disobedience will leave their mark upon all your life. You cannot live that life as other women do. You are shamed, accursed——”

“Oh, hush!” broke imploringly from the girl's white lips. “I cannot bear more; my strength has all gone——”

She broke down into passionate sobs, and suddenly flung herself at the feet of that silent figure with the marble face and burning eyes.

“Aunt! Aunt!” she cried; “say one kind word. Don't you forsake me, too. Think of when I was a little child—happy and innocent; think of how I craved for love and tenderness, and all was cold and blank around me. Don't you, too, say I am lost, and shamed, and beyond forgiveness—if only for my mother's sake; my mother whom I never knew, but who would have pitied me—now!”

What was the change in the calm face? Something, something, surely, as those tear-dimmed eyes looked up to it in their agony of beseechment. A quiver of paling lips, a flush, a tremor, something that seemed to recall to the kneeling girl a dream long past—a dream of when she was a little child.

Involuntarily the proud figure stooped, the arms went out in answering sympathy. There were tears brimming in the down-bent eyes, and then—a chill—a moan almost of despair. The arms fell at her side—empty still. The face took back its marble pallor; the eyes held only anguish, dumb, despairing, as a spoken doom.

“Beware!” said a voice. “Remember your penance!”

Whatever of pity, whatever of softness or remorse had thrilled Anna von Waldstein's proud heart, seemed once more frozen back by that warning. She drew back a step; but as she did so, the girl's overwrought strength seemed suddenly to snap like a bow unstrung. She had borne so much that terrible day, she could bear no more. Without a sound she fell senseless as the dead at the feet of the woman who had repelled her!

CHAPTER III.

“AND I—WHITHER SHALL I GO?”

THE sound of a clock striking the hour aroused Gretchen from what had been a sleep of utter exhaustion after her fainting fit.

She was lying on her bed, covered with some warm wrap. A light was in the room, burning dimly in its shadows. She lay quite still, and tried to recall all that had happened in the space of one brief day. In slow and fragmentary thoughts it all came back, and she slowly rose to a sitting position and shivered as with cold, while her eyes roved restlessly around the room.

No one was there. The house was still as the grave. She wondered whether they had left—those cold and cruel women who had had no pity on her desolate plight, not one compassionate word for her misery. One by one their words came back to her with clearer meaning, with more bitter shame. She leant back against the pillows sick at heart, and tortured by a vague fear that sent the blood in a burning flame to her brow, and made her pulses beat with fitful and uncertain measure.

How had they found her, she wondered, and, having found her, could they, indeed, drag her back to the bondage she had once escaped?

She felt weak and powerless. There was no one to whom she could appeal, save Adrian Lyle; but he was not here; he could not help her now. She must depend on herself. Something must be done, and soon.

It was midnight now. Perhaps in the morning they would be there to force her away; to chain her back into the old slavery. The Church of Rome had a far-reaching hand and a grip of iron. She seemed to feel its pressure once again, and to feel also the old sense of weakness, and powerlessness, and dread.

Desolate, forsaken, unloved, so looked her life as it stretched into vague to-morrows that could bring her no hope or peace ever again. She put her hand to her eyes; they smarted and burned with a weight of tears which, she felt, she must not shed yet. She must act, and act at once. Time enough for weeping by-and-by in the dreary days to come. Mechanically she rose from her bed, and went to the window, and looked out. The night was dark and starless; but she felt glad of the gloom. It would assist her in that scheme which dimly floated through her fevered brain—a tremulous hope of escape and some distant refuge, where she could hide herself from all who knew her sad story, and begin a new life: a life of toil, perhaps, and hardship, but a life that might still bear within it one small element of

hope that should rescue it from utter despair.

She was as ignorant of the world as a child. She had never yet had to trust to herself, or depend on herself. The simple notions and habits of her past life still clung to her, and the only other experience she had attained was from books.

She dropped the blind and went over to the press, where her outdoor clothes hung. The first thing that caught her eye was that beautiful cloak with its bordering of rich fur, that Neale Kenyon had bought for her as his first present. The sight of it was like the ghost of a past happiness. She shuddered and turned away, and took down from its peg a thick, dark cloak of some rough homespun stuff, and a hat of the same. Then she put a few necessaries into a small handbag, and took what remained of Neale's cheque—some forty pounds in notes and gold—and placed her purse, for greater security, in the bosom of her dress.

These arrangements completed, she went to her door and softly opened it, and looked out. All was dark and still. With bated breath and noiseless step she crept down the stairs, and so made her way into the little room where Adrian Lyle had seen her that morning. The window opened on to the garden, and she knew she could leave the house by it without making any noise, or risking any discovery. She was now in that strained and excited state only possible to extreme youth—youth in its pathetic exaggeration of sorrow, its magnificent follies, its intensity of despair.

The sense of action, of freedom, of the keen, cold air, the dark and quiet night, gave her a sense also of strength and force. She walked on in the opposite direction to the village, her thought being to get to the station at N—, where she might find a train to a large town which she had heard old Peggy speak of as being some fifty miles or so away in that direction.

Here she would be easily concealed amidst noisy crowds and streets till she could get further away.

It seemed to her distraught and fevered brain that she could never put distance enough between herself and her persecutors. They would be sure to pursue her. They had found her once, they would find her again. She knew now that Bari must have led them to her retreat, and, remembering the insolence and triumph of his face, she marvelled what she had ever done that he should hate her so.

The air was cold and damp, but she hurried on so swiftly that she never felt it. Her eyes wandered in a blank, unseeing fashion over the deserted fields, the long stretch of hedgerows. Before daybreak, however, she became conscious of sudden and overmastering fatigue, then of pain sharp and acute, which turned her sick with terror and paralysed all her strength.

Gradually it dawned upon her that to proceed further was impossible. The intensity of physical pain overmastered every other feeling. She only longed for some shelter, some spot where she could lie down and suffer in silence. She left the road and turned into a narrow lane, and wandered aimlessly on, scarcely conscious of what she was doing. Presently she entered a little wood, dark and damp and desolate enough in the grey dawn of the wintry day. She staggered on a few yards, and then half fell, half seated herself, on the mossy trunk of a fallen tree.

She could not tell how long she had been there when a voice roused her. She looked up, and saw an old withered face, wrinkled and witch-like, before her. In some dim and far-off way a voice reached her ears, but the sense and meaning of it were alike unintelligible.

Then again the death-like throes of mortal agony seized and racked her frame, and with some instinctive appeal from sex to sex, she stretched out her hand to the fierce, strange-looking creature who stood there mumbling and muttering in that strange fashion.

Whether she understood or not, Gretchen could not tell; but she beckoned the girl to follow her, and she rose blindly and stupidly and staggered on over the rough, uneven ground till she reached a miserable-looking hovel, dark, mean, unsavoury as a human abode could well be. Under any other circumstances nothing could have induced the girl to enter such a place; but the extremity of mortal agony which seized her again, overpowered either scruple or consideration. She went in, and the door fell behind her.

It might have been some half-hour after when the full sense and peril of her situation pierced Gretchen's numbed and frozen senses, and the terror of what was inevitable now, added another pang to the fear of discovery.

From the miserable pallet on which she lay she stretched appealing hands to the wretched-looking being, on whom her only claim was that of kindred sex.

"Promise me," she implored, in agonised entreaty; "promise me you will hide me here; you will tell no one—no one whom I am. I have money; I am not poor; I will reward you—only promise—"

The broken words, the foreign accent puzzled the old woman considerably; but as she loosened the girl's cloak and helped her to divest herself of her heavy garments, she found the purse which Gretchen had concealed in her bosom, and that discovery was an argument as effectual as convincing.

"Don't thee fret thyself," she muttered. "I'll tell none o' thee. There, now, do thee keep quiet. I'll do my best, though it's a poor place and naught in it for a lady like thee, so weak and young."

Then Gretchen heard no more, remembered no more; but seemed to plunge into a world of darkness and solitude, alternated by paroxysms of intense suffering that racked physical endurance to its very utmost.

RACECOURSES ABOUT LONDON.

KEMPTON PARK.

It is a fine grassy plain, through which the silver Thames pursues its winding way from Shepperton to Kingston, among rich pastures. In the centre of this region, where it is at its quietest and sleepest, lies Kempton Park, that is quiet and sleepy itself, but that is roused into vigorous and exuberant life at frequently-recurring intervals. To casual visitors, indeed, it seems as if Kempton Park Races were always going on, and it is difficult to avoid the crush in the railway carriages and the rush on the station platforms that attend these gatherings. The crowd, indeed, is better behaved and its language less highly flavoured than is the case at the open race meetings of the period. For Kempton Park is not to be entered except by the payment of half-a-crown, and as there are many rogues and vagabonds, as well as honest men, who are not in a position to put down the necessary coin, the attendance is necessarily, to such an extent, more select.

The notion of establishing an enclosed racecourse, to secure a contribution from every looker-on, is not at all a new one. Someone attempted something of the kind on Wormwood Scrubbs in 1817, but the attempt broke down. A more serious speculation was that of enclosing a course on Notting Hill, named the Hip-

podrome, which was opened in 1837. It happened, unfortunately for the projectors of the enterprise, that some right of way existed over part of the ground, and on the first race meeting on the new course, a mob, taking advantage of a show of legal right, broke through the hoarding that enclosed the ground, and took up a position as non-paying spectators, to the number of many thousands.

The enterprise collapsed at the end of five years of indifferent success. Since then many attempts have been made to turn to a profit the general passion for horse-racing. But little worthy of attention was effected till a strong company, supported by distinguished names and by influential racing men and owners of racehorses, purchased Kempton Park, and made it the home of a club whose motto, "For Sport and Recreation," has been honestly adhered to, and whose success is a notable symptom of a change in the manners and deportment of the age.

There is something interesting in Kempton Park itself, which should not be Kempton by the way, but Kenton, the name given it in the Ordnance Survey, and justly current in the neighbourhood. For Kenton is a contraction of Kenington, a name implying a Royal residence, in the days of the Heptarchy perhaps. Kenington is clearly indicated in the Domesday Survey, under the head of Chenetone. The manor was then occupied by fourteen "villains," honest people, no doubt, in the way of small farmers, who paid their rent in labour and worked much harder for themselves than they did for their lords. Then there were three cottagers, also farming a little land, and two "slaves." And at that time, as well as now, there was a wide expanse of meadows and pastures, equal to five carucates, says the Survey, which may be any quantity, from three hundred to five hundred acres or more. Then there was a vineyard of eight acres, a relic, perhaps, of the days of the Royal occupation, when the King drank the blood-red wine of his own especial vintage. The summers were longer then, perhaps, with more generous sunshine, and the Kenton wine may have had a well-earned reputation.

But Kenton was no longer a Royal seat at the time of the Conquest; it belonged to the King's Thane, Ulward Wit, who perhaps kept a stud farm there, and watched the mares and foals as they cantered over the soft herbage. Presently

there was an end of Ulward, perhaps at Hastings fight, perhaps as an exile and in some foreign broil. Anyhow, a Norman Earl ruled in his stead, no other than Robert of Mortain, of whom, and of his son William, readers of Mr. Freeman's histories will have heard enough. That son rebelled against the Conqueror's son Henry, and in that rebellion lost all his English Lordships, and among them the Manor of Kenton.

The site was pleasing then, as it is now; on one side flowed a gentle stream, bordered by willows and osiers, where often a heron might be flushed, and a hawk might find its quarry. To the south, the demesne was bounded by that famous river the Thames; full of all manner of fish, and furrowed by barges with their huge sails, that brought the wines of Gascony, or the rich stuffs of Cyprus, to the very gateway of this noble dwelling. To the north stretched the great forest of Middlesex, abounding in wild game—there is just a morsel left of the old forest at Littleton, between Kenton and Ashford, where everything looks wild and savage as if the land had been untouched since the Conquest, and where the conies frisk about in droves.

Here was a dwelling fit for the King, and the King himself being of that opinion, he took it into his own hands and made a Royal Palace of it. And here the Court came at intervals—such a train as may be imagined, with its gleam of gold and steel among the wild woodland glades, with the blare of horns, and the cry of dogs, and the clatter of all the strange outlandish tongues of those who followed the Royal train. And yet it was hardly a stranger sight, and perhaps not more brilliant a spectacle, than Kenton after long ages of a tranquil repose may witness on any racing day. What crowds; what strange tongues; what unintelligible cries; what noble horses; beautiful women; splendid equipages; what soothsayers, mountebanks, jugglers; what crowds of loyal subjects of King Sport!

But between the two Royalties, there is a long gap of something like desolation. When the young King Edward the Third had disposed of the Queen Mother and her favourite in that affair at Nottingham, he took things into his own hands, and began to lock up all the Royal possessions which had been neglected in the late slack and uncertain times; among others, Kenton. The report of his surveyors is in existence. These found a great hall, sadly in want of repair, with pantry and buttery

adjacent; and a great chamber, with a chimney ready to fall; and, adjoining, the chapel and wardrobe such as the King had used aforetime. There was the Queen's chamber too, with its chapel and wardrobe, with a chamber called the Aleye; also a house called the Aumery; the larder, and the kitchen, and the grand chamber were still in existence, with a wall about the park, and a still more extensive wall around the whole manor. But buildings, walls, all things, were falling to ruin and decay.

From that time there was no more thought of the place as a Royal Palace. It now became known in the neighbourhood as Cold Kenton. There is something very expressive in such a popular epithet, which embodies a lingering memory, not of a life or a generation, but of centuries. The word recalls the warmth that once dwelt about the place; the hearths once ablaze with cheerful fires of logs; the columns of blue smoke that rose against the background of green wood and into the blue sky; the rich silks and velvets that gleamed about the place; the laughter-loving women and thoughtless youths who haunted the meadows, and to honest Giles and Joan seemed beings of another world. But all this had passed away; the halls were abandoned, the walls laid bare, and the wind whistled through the broken ruins. All this is told in the one word. It is Cold Kenton now, and centuries elapsed before the throng and bustle of the world and its concomitants reached the place once more.

It is a retired nook, even as we see it now, the green course lying in full view from the railway line, the rails and white posts and the stands and balconies reared high in the air. Even the railway is a quite retiring kind of a line, ending abruptly at Shepperton, which is not in the way of being a metropolis; and so for many years a single train ran quietly to and fro along a single line, resting a good deal and never hastening. And this is still the state of affairs between whiles, till the racing tap is turned on every month or so; or when racing is over for the year, it is steeple-chasing, hurdle-racing, or perhaps coursing. Anyhow, a frothy, seething torrent of humanity comes frequently rushing and roaring down into these quiet shades; under every tree along the way sits a three-card trick man, tempting the passers-by to try and cheat him out of crowns; and at every stile the visitors are called upon to purchase correct cards of the races. Special trains are running continually, and long lines of railway

carriages and horse boxes crowd the sidings. There is a special siding, too, which carries some privileged passengers to the very doors of the Club Stand, so that Royal Highnesses and gracious Duchesses can step from the railway carriage to the lawn or balcony, without coming in contact with the crowd; which is considerate for the crowd, for it is they who generally get hustled on such occasions.

And yet only about ten years ago Kenton Park was utterly unknown to the great bulk of the world. It was a quiet country-seat, with little or nothing in the way of traces of its former distinction; indeed, after Royalty deserted the place, it has had few tenants of note. But one of the first acts of Queen Elizabeth on ascending the throne was to grant the manor to Anne, Duchess of Somerset, for her life, she being the widow of that Protector Somerset, who rose almost to supreme power, but fell from it and was beheaded in the reign of Edward the Sixth. It was this arrogant Duke, it will be remembered, who built old Somerset House in the Strand, which takes its name from him—built it out of the materials of the Priory Church of the Knights of St. John in Clerkenwell, and used even partly of the choir of old St. Paul's—and it was hardly likely that any one belonging to him would be a "persona grata" at the Court of the reactionary Mary. But the poor old Duchess, who had probably had nothing to do with all this church breaking, lighted upon better times in the reign of good Queen Bess, and perhaps ended her days among the quiet meads of Kenton Park.

Kenton was still a Royal manor up to the reign of Charles the First, who granted it in fee—for what consideration is not known—to Sir Robert Killigrew, of that Cornish family which founded the town of Eal-mouth. But no family ever took root there. We come across the names of Grantham, Chardin, Musgrave, as temporary possessors of the manor during the eighteenth century; but these are names only, and there is no record of anything picturesque or striking in their connection with the place.

With some Jacobean mansion planted there; with some Dutch gardener to have dug canals and laid out alleys and lagoons to his heart's content; Kempton might have become as famous as Hampton Court. But this was not to be; its eventual destiny after all was that to which circumstances had best fitted it. It was too flat;

there was too much of it; too much grass and not enough timber to suit an age that had started, à la Syntax, in search of the picturesque.

But as it is, a journey to Kempton on a day when some big stakes are to be run for, is a very enjoyable experience. There is the glimpse of that charming reach of the river below Richmond Bridge, with the boats dancing on the water, and the barges whose masts and sails group so well with the silver-grey of the beautiful bridge, with the luxuriant foliage, the lawns, the rich pastures, the white houses shining among the trees; and then leafy Twickenham, all one bower of shrubs, and trees, and snug-walled gardens; and Strawberry Hill, that suggests Horace Walpole, who would have vastly enjoyed the day at Kempton, with gracious, high-born dames, and lively and honourable misses.

Bushey Park is to the left, with its long, chestnut avenues, and Hampton is reached and passed, and another glimpse of the river can be had, now quite a country stream, flowing pleasantly between low, grassy banks.

Then the racecourse station is reached, and the whole crowd turns out: a motley crowd, drawn from all parts of England—country squires, London stockbrokers, bookmakers from Birmingham, from Manchester, and all the northern towns; and a solid detachment of all the trades of London. This is not a gathering of gamblers; the jolly contented faces you see about you are not those of people who have played their fortunes on the cast. They will be jollier if they win; but not cast down if they lose, as long as they have a spin for their money. Nor can the professional element be called a gambling one; winning is a certainty to the judicious bookmaker, and, when he comes to harm, it is generally by speculating in more hazardous transactions, such as stocks and shares perhaps, or wool, or petroleum.

The green turf spreads invitingly within the jealously guarded enclosure. There are lawns, and flower-beds, and balconies tier above tier. Behind, chimneys are smoking famously, giving promise of hot luncheons and the cheering cup of afternoon tea. It is no cold Kenton this; but zealously warm and hospitable to all its favoured guests; too zealously at times, as when a chimney catches fire and drops a torrent of blacks among the choice millinery of a bevy of ladies fair.

What a buzz, too, about the betting en-

closure! There is no coldness here either. The rails are festooned with the overcoats of the betting men. This is one kind of occupation in which bulk, or height at all events, gives a certain advantage. A little man is lost in the excited crowd, and hence all kinds of contrivances to remedy the defect of nature. A pair of shoes, with soles some four feet thick, are waiting for their owner to step into them; others support themselves on elongated camp-stools; and a favourite device is a black bag, so strong in its framework that its owner throws it on the ground and jumps upon it fearlessly, and offers the odds freely from this coign of vantage.

A bookmaker is nothing without his clerk, who frequently works on shares, and manipulates the big book of the size of a hand atlas, quick of fingers, and as ready and accurate as an electric clock. The business may not be exactly legitimate; but it must be acknowledged that no professional man works harder in his way than the well-established bookmaker.

But while we have been watching the confused turmoil of the ring, arrivals have thickened, drags and carriages are drawn up along the rail. Punctuality is the rule on the modern racecourse, and no sooner does the clock on its turret high point to the hour appointed, than the curtain is rung up for commencement of the play. A race at Kempton Park—to resume the official spelling, which is wrong nevertheless—is like a race anywhere else, “only more so,” as a devotee of Kempton facetiously remarks as he sums up the advantages of his favourite resort. The best mile-and-a-half of turf in the kingdom; some of the best horses of the day attracted by rich prizes; the best company, which goes with out saying. Epsom must take a back seat; Doncaster is played out; Newmarket has only its old renown to trade upon. Here is the future metropolis of racing, say the thick-and-thin admirers of Kempton.

FROM HER HIGH ESTATE.

A STORY IN THREE PARTS. PART II.

THE sun was shining down bright and strong on the village of Berckenstein, the sky was unbroken blue, and the mellow summer weather left no ground for complaint, even to the most exacting of grumblers. This was satisfactory under the circumstances, for it was the Sunday of the Kirmesse, the great festival by which the

Berckensteiners reckoned their public and domestic chronology.

All down the narrow street, to the very church porch, there were canvas booths and wooden caravans, gingerbread stalls, lotteries, shooting-galleries, waxworks, a theatre, a menagerie, and a circus; there were crowds of men and women, of youths, maidens, and children; there was a deafening Platt-Deutch chorus of many voices, blending with the din of many popular tunes played at the same time in different parts of the fair; there was a pervading odour of humanity diversified by whiffs of beer, peppermint, and schnapps.

As yet, however, the jollification was by no means at its height, for though the congregation which had attended early church had already mingled with the throng in the street, a second relay was streaming in through the porch, to hear what the Herr Pastor would have to say in honour of the annual holiday. The church-goers took a long time to wend their way through the many distractions that beset them—indeed, why should they hurry and bustle, as if the Kirmesse was just an ordinary Sunday, and when there were so many greetings to be exchanged with relations, more or less remote of kin, and acquaintances, who had not been visible since Christmas, or perhaps since the last Kirmesse? And after the usual salutations had been given and taken, this special question was, on this particular occasion, almost unfailingly added: "Isn't it wonderful news about Beumer's Friedel?" And if the other were so far out of the world as to be forced to answer: "Why, what has he been doing?" his better-informed interlocutor would continue, that Fritz had found out something wonderful with his machine-making, and that there was a lot about it in the newspapers, and that Beumer said it was a great improvement in electric lighting, whatever that might be. And those who least understood the nature and purpose of electric lighting looked even more impressed than those who did; for the miller had grown steadily richer and more independent with the flight of years, and every one, for a long way round Berckenstein, looked up to him with great respect, modified by a certain shyness of his unusual freedom of thought.

It was not often that the prosperous, broad-built Radical was to be seen at public worship. Attendance at church was one of the links he had broken in

the chain of established habits, during his absence from Berckenstein long ago. But to-day being the Kirmesse, and being rendered doubly noteworthy by his son's recently acquired honours, the miller—instead of his usual dominical inspection of his fields and barns—arrayed himself in his best suit, and condescended to walk a few steps in front of his wife to church.

Friedel—Friedel no longer, but Doctor Friedrich Beumer—had grown and changed mightily since the days when he listened to Hans Andersen's "Fairy Stories" by the river. He was as tall as his father, and strongly built like him; with brown hair; and deep-set, dark blue eyes, beneath a broad forehead. His face was not refined, in the sense of refinement of outline; but it had the refinement which comes from thought, and beyond this a bold nobility and determination which took hearts by storm, through the confidence and faith it gave one in him; and, truly, if a man's self-respect and self-reliance be honest and pure, all honest-minded men and women will share it with him.

Friedrich bore his new honours very quietly; he left all the pride and exultation to his parents, to whom, in fact, the chief congratulations were addressed, since the simple country folk felt shy in presence of this young man, whose name was in all the newspapers, and who was a stranger to them except in name. The miller and his wife stood for some minutes in the porch after their son had entered the church. When they followed him, they saw that he had taken his seat well in front.

"Umph," said the miller in a half whisper, "I'm not going to sit there, Ursula! I'd rather have a place a bit further back. I haven't come to church to get as close to the preaching as I can push."

Just then the wheezy old organ in the gallery raised its voice, and the whole congregation, with one exception, rose to their feet. As they stood respectfully, there walked up the aisle, with stately step and head erect, a tall, aristocratic man of middle age; the expression of his eyes was half melancholy, half bitter, and the lines in his face looked as if he had had his share of troubles. Two ladies followed him: one, a frail-looking woman about his own age, who had never been beautiful, and who looked oppressed and worn; the other, a tall, slender girl with abundance of golden hair, a well-chiselled

face, and a noble carriage; her eyes bent down so that only the white lids and long lashes could be seen. As she passed the seat where Friedrich Beumer sat, he held his breath to listen for the rustle of her gown and the light fall of her foot, while every nerve of his body thrilled with an electric shock from a battery which was well known long before he had taken his road to fame by meddling with dynamos.

When these personages had reached the chancel and taken their places in a velvet-cushioned pew at right angles to the rest of the pews, the congregation meekly resumed their seats—excepting Miller Beumer, who had, of course, remained seated. This was how Berckenstein used, in olden times, to show its respect to the von Bercken family, Sunday after Sunday, in the village church.

Friedrich Beumer's seat had been admirably chosen to command a view of the august group in the chancel—that is, he could have seen each member of it perfectly, if he had chosen. He kept his eyes, however, on the stained glass window just above the Castle pew, with his attention apparently rivetted on the twelve Apostles, who were there arranged in three rows, and docketed with their names emblazoned in a character which defied all attempts to decipher it. But Friedrich was not puzzling himself to decide the identity of Saint Peter or Saint John; he was in truth not conscious of anything except the outline of an oval face, which was considerably below his line of sight. This was not the first time he had come to church for no other purpose than to worship from afar the radiant creature who had taken the place of his little playfellow to whom he had never spoken since he jumped up from his supper to kiss her tearful cheek a dozen years before. Magda would probably, he thought, have forgotten that curious episode of her childhood; and indeed, even for him, it was an insignificant matter. It was not the recollection of that which had drawn his heart towards her, when he had seen her after his first long absence from home. Those few days, spent playing truant by the river, did not count for anything in the fascination which her beauty held over him. Looking on her, he felt that had he but met her by chance in a crowded street, where she had passed by, never to reappear, he must have worshipped her then and there, and for ever after.

To break his reverie, came the hymn.

He slowly moved his eyes from the painted Apostles, and brought them to bear on the book in front of him. He longed to let them rest in passing on Magda's face, but his courage was not equal to the occasion. He kept them fixed on the music through the slow length of six stanzas, straining his ears the while to distinguish the sound of her voice among the scores who were singing round him, all lustily and with a good courage. Then came the prayers, through which Friedrich stood reverently with the rest of the congregation; but the words came to him but as an empty sound. So did the singing of another hymn. At last as he sat down at sermon time, he found courage to give over his contemplation of the long-studied window; and while the preacher was turning the leaves of his Bible to find the text, Friedrich looked at the face he had been covertly watching for three-quarters of an hour, and found it fairer, and nobler, and sweeter than ever. His gaze must have been very powerful, for under its influence, Magda raised her eyes. For one full moment—it seemed to him like an eternity—those eyes met his. Across the short space that divided him from her, he could see into their very depths. They were clear grey eyes, with a line of golden colour round the pupil, which gave them an eager expression even in the most casual glance. He could not remember how her eyes had looked as a child; now they were like stars set in a firmament far beyond his reach; yet that momentary contact with the unattainable, left him longing for another, and so far emboldened him, that he watched her from time to time all through the sermon. But as a German poet whom Friedrich loved has put it, "The sun does not rise twice a day."

At last the sermon came to an end, and the small company of great folk returned to the Castle, and the great mass of small folk went out into the summer sunshine to enjoy themselves and to look forward to the great event of the day, the dance in the evening at the "Golden Eagle."

Berckenstein Kirmesse has almost died out in these days, but the villagers still remember that annual ball when the great barn-like room used to be decked with green wreaths and paper flowers, and flags and mottoes; and when all the good dancers used to come from far and near; and when the Herrschaften from the Castle used to come down in state to open the ball, and how they would stay an hour or so, dancing with the villagers and farmers.

Ah! those Kirmesse balls had been a wonderful dream of bliss to many a rosy-cheeked maiden, who almost doubted the truth of her own memory when she recalled the grace and courtesy of some noble partner who had looked into her unsophisticated eyes. That sad drama, of which the miller's Lieschen had been the heroine, had opened at one of these balls. This may have been the reason why the miller never graced the room with his presence, even after the Herrschaften had departed and left the way for less dignified manners. "He could enjoy his Kirmesse without getting into a sweat over dancing," he asserted bluntly, and no one cared to argue the point with him.

But apparently the newly-made doctor did not feel himself bound by the precedent of his father's example. Towards eight o'clock he proceeded to make a somewhat elaborate toilet, such as he had learnt to make at Berlin, and then took his way towards the "Golden Eagle."

Outside the "Wild Huntsman," the rival inn, sat the miller with a dozen friends and relations, drinking beer out of stone mugs with metal covers and puffing huge clouds of smoke out of their gaily painted long pipes.

"By jingo!" cried the miller, as his son in his town attire came past them. "What's going to happen next? Are those your school-going clothes, my lad?"

A loud guffaw greeted this sally. Friedrich tried not to look uncomfortable.

"Hang it all, man!" pursued his father, "you were fine enough in all conscience before. Why have you put on a fresh suit of clothes?"

"Because," replied the son with a shade of hesitation, "I am going to the ball at the 'Golden Eagle.'"

The miller raised his eyes in blank astonishment, then letting his heavy fist fall on the table so that the metal covers danced on the stone cups, he exclaimed:

"Well! as I'm a living man! Going to the ball! And what are you going there for?"

"I'm going," returned Friedrich, who had recovered his equanimity, "for the same purpose as other people go, namely to dance"—which reason, as will shortly be seen, was not quite true.

For a moment Beumer eyed his son in silence, then he said slowly:

"Well, Fritz, I should have thought your education would have given you more

sense. It's many a long year since a Beumer danced in the 'Golden Eagle,' and if I had my way never a one should again."

But Doctor Friedrich was moulded out of the same metal as his father, so he had his way, and in two minutes more he was standing in a little crowd just inside the ball-room, who were respectfully drawing back to allow the party from the Castle to pass. It was a party of about twenty ladies and gentlemen; for the neighbouring gentry looked on the ball as one of their annual duties to the rustics.

The Count looked even more stately and proud than usual, most likely because he was trying to unbend, which made his hauteur the more perceptible; but whoever noticed this it passed unobserved by Friedrich, for whom the Castle party consisted of one person—the beautiful Fräulein Magda.

While he watched her, the band tuned their instruments, the august persons selected partners, even the sad-faced Countess took a turn at the first dance with the village doctor.

The Count led off the buxom hostess of the "Golden Eagle."

"And who?" asked his Lordship benignly, as he and his smiling partner trod a slow measure together. "And who may that young man be who is standing by that window? I remarked him in church this morning. He seems a stranger to me."

"That, your honour," replied the Frau Wirthin, "is Friedel—I mean Friedrich—the son of Beumer at the mill."

"Ah, indeed," replied the Count, in a tone which, to a practised ear, would have ended the subject.

However, the good woman was more eager to continue to impart what she could than to listen for shades of intonation:

"Your honour does not know, perhaps," she continued, "that it is this Friedrich Beumer who has been making such a wonderful discovery about electric lights. There was a lot about it in the newspaper, which, no doubt, your honour could understand far better than I could; but anyhow, Beumer's Friedel is to make his fortune out of it, and the Beumers are very proud of him."

"Ah, indeed!" said the Count again more coldly than before.

Frau Wolff was disappointed that her news had not made more impression; indeed, when she saw how small an interest the matter excited in a well-bred mind, she began to think that, perhaps, it was only ignorant people who made such a fuss over

the invention of a machine, and that really Fritz Beumer would have had more claim to admiration if he had exerted himself a little to dance, and to talk to the girls, instead of standing there looking as if he thought himself too clever to dance.

Poor Friedrich! He certainly did not look as if the ball were yielding him any amusement. He had taken his place in the recess of a window, and there he remained in spite of the bewitching glances of would-be partners through three successive dances.

He had come to the "Golden Eagle" fully determined to dance with Magda. Two hours ago it had seemed the most natural thing in the world that, when she was stooping to dance with others, he should not be passed over. After having been the hero of the day, he had almost looked on this distinction as his due. But now, in her presence; when he had seen a condescending invitation sent to the Forester Hermann, and to the Farmer Schultz; he felt that between him and his Queen there was a great gulf fixed which no condescension of hers could bridge over. Something of which he had never before been conscious, rose within him, and forbade him to speak one word to her, to touch her hand, or her slender waist, if he might only touch her and speak to her as one of an insignificant crowd among whom she walked for a moment and forgot for ever. And since he could not dance with Magda, he would not choose any other partner, but stood looking rather gloomy and feeling intensely miserable, until, when the fourth dance was about to begin, the innkeeper, Wolff, who acted as Master of the Ceremonies, stood before him:

"Well, Fritz," he said with patronising bonhomie, "why so forlorn, my lad? Will it make you look gayer to hear that the Herrschaften bid you dance this waltz with the noble Fräulein?"

"What noble Fräulein?" asked Friedrich, blushing, but not moving from his place.

"What noble Fräulein?" returned Wolff. "You haven't come back so clever that you can't understand plain language; or is it that you imitate your father's Radical ways? Why, of course I mean the Gräfin Magda, and that you have the honour of a waltz with her."

"Waltz!" stammered Friedrich. "I—you must please excuse me. I do not waltz."

Here the music struck up.

"Lucky for you," cried Wolff. "Listen! It isn't a waltz after all, it is the 'Rheinländer'; so you needn't excuse yourself."

"Far from it," returned the other, who had recovered his balance and was half proud of his own firmness in refusing what he had so much desired; "I should be still more hopeless in a 'Rheinländer.'"

"Then, why the deuce," retorted Wolff testily, "do you come to a ball if you can't dance? Just tell me that;" and he turned away in disgust to his duties.

Two minutes after Friedrich was outside in the cool night air, the strains of the "Rheinländer" floating after him, till the crashing music of the booths drowned them. He hurried through the still crowded street, past the flaring lights, past the dark, silent gateway of the Castle, on under the shadow of the square brown tower, down the steep descent till he stood by the river and saw the golden starlight far down in its bosom. He passed by a willow stump that leaned over the water, and, as he went, the words of an old story came back to him.

"It was certainly rather bold of him that he ventured to say to the Emperor's daughter: 'Will you have me?' But he ventured for all that, for his name was celebrated far and wide, and there were hundreds of Princesses who would readily have said 'yes.'"

And these words that he had heard long ago at that very spot came back again to him like an inspiration and a resolve.

So you see, Friedrich Beumer did not after all dance at the Kirmesse ball.

THE MADEIRA OF THE EAST.

THERE is nothing like war, according to Lord Palmerston, for teaching the nations geography, and it is probable that, but for the repeated squabbles between the Empires of China and Japan, the majority of English people would never have heard of the Loo-Choo Islands. Even now it is not too much to assume that the majority of Europeans could not, on the spur of the moment, give a more definite description of their locality than that they are "somewhere in the China Seas." But as a matter of fact, they are not in the China Sea at all, and, to be strictly accurate, although apparently contradictory, there are no "Loo-Choo" Islands anywhere.

There is a chain of islands which may be said to connect the Island of Formosa

with the southern portion of Japan; and the central links of that chain form a group which is known to the Japanese as Riū-Kiū. The Chinese tongue, which cannot roll off an "R," has made this name into Liū-Kiū, and this again has been Europeanised into Loo-Choo.

There is indeed a tradition transmitted by a Chinese writer, one Li Ting-yüen, who was once sent as envoy to Liū-Kiū, that the islands were first discovered in the Sui dynasty (about A.D. 580), by Chu Kwan, who called them Liū-Kiū, or "the floating dragon," because of the peculiar appearance they present when figured on a chart. But then, as he had no chart and had never seen them thus figured, the story lacks the elements of probability. Otherwise they appear in Chinese records as Liū-Kwei, or the "floating demons"; and by some the present name is understood to mean "the pendant ball."

Now this little group of islands happens to be very interesting geographically, historically, and ethnologically, and they have this additional charm that they have been up till now almost entirely unknown except as a geographical expression, and that an inaccurate one.

We propose, therefore, to gather from various sources what will give the reader a fairly definite and clear conception of them and their idiosyncrasies. Among others we draw upon Commodore Perry's "Voyages"; Dr. George Smith's "Lew-Chew and the Lew-Chewans"; Kaempfer's "History of Japan"; Dr. Guillemard's "Cruise of the Marchesa"; J. J. Rein's "Japan," etc.

The last-named work is a very ambitious one. It professes to give an exhaustive and accurate account of the whole Empire of Japan, in a narrative of travels and researches undertaken for, and at the cost of, the German Government. Yet, Professor Rein has very little to tell of what he, at any rate, consistently calls Riū-kiū. The area of the group he places at one hundred and seventy-one square miles, which seems an unduly low estimate, and the population at one hundred and seventy thousand, in 1883. The ancient Kingdom of Riū-kiū consisted of thirty-six inhabited islands, and it now constitutes the thirty-sixth department of Japan. Some of the islands, Professor Rein says, are volcanic, and some coralline, but as the majority of them are stated to be "both geologically and botanically unknown," he commits himself to no further description than that "the products

of both China and Japan are here cultivated—especially batatas and the sugar-cane." The people are Japanese in manners and language, but Chinese apparently in taste, judging from the abundance of pigs. Professor Rein was in Japan in 1874 and 1875, but Dr. Guillemard was not only in Japan, but also in Liū-Kiū, as recently as 1882, so we have something more definite now to go upon—somewhat more as regards their present condition than their past history, however.

The traditions of the Liū-Kiūans can only be regarded as hazy, however circumstantial, when we find that they extend back to the year 16,615 B.C., when two ancestors of their race somehow came into being and were called Omo-mei-kiū. They married and had three sons and two daughters. The eldest son was Tien-tsin, or the Grandson of Heaven, and he was the first King of the Islands; from the second son descended the tributary Princes; and from the third son, the common people. The eldest daughter was called Kūn-Kūn, the Spirit of Heaven; and the second daughter was Tcho-tcho, the Spirit of the Sea. Thereafter the historian becomes confused or forgetful, for the traditions skip over some eighteen thousand years, during which twenty-five dynasties had had their day and ceased to be, and bring us at one step to A.D. 1187, when Chun-tien began his reign, and the authentic history of the islands, which it will be observed, is some six hundred years later than the alleged discovery of the Chinese traveller, Chu Kwan. The main island is only five days' sail from Foo-Chow, and it is on record that one of the Emperors of the Sui dynasty, sent an expedition, accompanied by many learned people, to request the King of Liū-Kiū to come and pay him homage. This the King declined to do, whereupon the Emperor sent an army of ten thousand men, who defeated the Liū-Kiūans, killed the King, burned the capital, captured some five thousand slaves, and then returned to China.

This was the beginning of the Chinese connection, which for a long time was a profitable one for the Liū-Kiūans, from a commercial point of view; and moreover, by some strange oversight or favour, they were not called on to pay tribute. But when Chun-tien came to the throne, things began to change. He was certainly Japanese, and is said to have been descended from the old Kings of Japan, but how or

why his family went to Liü-Kiü no man knoweth. Chun-tien taught people to write—in characters borrowed from the Japanese—and the whole tone of the kingdom began to be Japanese.

A century later another Chinese Emperor, recalling the exploits of his predecessor, sent an expedition to regain control of Liü-Kiü, but the affair was a failure. Then came a period of civil war, which split the island into three Kingdoms, after which China stepped in once more, and exacted a tribute, which was regularly paid for five centuries. The three Kings of Liü-Kiü formally declared themselves the vassals of the Chinese Emperor Hong-ou, who advised them to give up fighting and cultivate trade. A colony of thirty-six Chinese families was sent over from Fokien, and Chinese books, Chinese writing, and Confucianism were introduced.

In the fifteenth century the three Kingdoms were once more reunited under one King, to whom the Emperor of China gave the name of Chang, a name retained by the Royal Family of Liü-Kiü even unto this day. By this time there was a tolerably high state of civilisation in the islands, with numerous temples of considerable wealth. A large trade was being conducted regularly from Napha with Satsuma and other provinces of Japan, as well as with China and Corea.

In time the islands became a sort of entrepôt in the commerce between China and Japan, and the King of Liü-Kiü was a sort of permanent mediator in the quarrels between the two great nations. By-and-by, however, when Japan began to cherish the ambitious design of "annexing" both China and Corea, she sought, first of all, to induce the King of Liü-Kiü to acknowledge her supremacy. This the King refused to do, whereupon the Japanese invaded his Kingdom, plundered and burned his cities, and took him away captive.

In the seventeenth century the Chinese again gained the ascendancy; and so, tossed as a shuttlecock between the battledores of the two rival Empires, poor Liü-Kiü fared, until 1850, when the payment of tribute to China finally ceased. In 1879 the Japanese deposed the King, and forcibly annexed the islands; and in 1885, during the Franco-Chinese war, the formal recognition of their sovereignty was granted by China.

Thus we see that Liü-Kiü has both a

long and an eventful history, and has played an important part in the life of the Mongolian nations. The natural attractions of the islands are considerable. The climate is almost tropical; and, as the highest altitude of the hills is some two thousand feet, frost and snow are unknown. The result of the equable climate is that crops can be grown at any season, and, in fact, two harvests of rice are gathered in the year. The vegetation is rather suggestive of the temperate than of the tropical zone, for the hills are covered with pine woods, and the open country resembles in places an English park. Dr. Guillemard says that, while he did observe the pandanus and the camphor tree, the characteristics of the vegetation strongly resemble those of Japan—there being abundance of northern fruits, vegetables, and cereals, lovely nymphæas, hedges of dwarf bamboos, camellias, mallows, and peach trees.

Liü-Kiü has been described as the Madeira of the East, and is predicted as the future health-resort of the Japanese. But even as Cannes has its earthquakes, Liü-Kiü has its typhoons, which blow with tremendous force, and cause great damage periodically.

Commodore Perry was struck with the abundance of limestone in Liü-Kiü. We learn now that this rock is largely used for building purposes and for road-making, and that masses of coralline limestone are found far inland at considerable elevations. Granite, almost white, also exists in quantities, while the promontories round the coast are generally composed of gneiss. The Americans found indications of coral, but, so far as we know, their discovery has never been verified. There are traditions of gold having been found, which appear to be mythical; but as the presents of the Kings to the Emperors of China consisted largely of copper, there is reason to believe that there are mines of that metal in the islands somewhere, although no "Barbarian" has ever learned their locality. The Liü-Kiüans are credited with a remarkable degree of caution in their communication with foreigners.

The land belongs to the Government, who sublet it to an aristocratic class called the "literati," who in turn employ the peasants in its cultivation. These last get only one-fifth of the produce, and the remainder, less expenses and taxes, goes to the landlord. The peasantry, therefore, are very poor, and much of the land is uncultivated, although by all accounts the

islands are capable of supporting a much larger population than they have. A peculiarity of the agriculture is that two crops of the same grain may be growing side by side—the one ready for harvesting, the other just beginning to sprout.

The most important crops are rice, wheat, and sweet potatoes, but peas and beans are also largely grown, as are tobacco and the sugar-cane, the latter being of a small variety. The tobacco leaf seems to be the same as that grown in Japan, but is very carelessly prepared. There are many kinds of fruit and vegetables: including oranges, figs, peaches, and melons, bananas, turnips, pumpkins, onions, etc. Droughts are not infrequent, but an elaborate system of irrigation protects the farmer from their destructive effects. The typhoons he can do nothing to counteract.

In manufactures the Liü-Kiüans are poor. Their textile fabrics and pottery are coarse, and the clothing of the upper classes is imported from Japan; but in pipes, fans, and basket-work they are dexterous; and now that they are becoming so thoroughly Japanned, it is probable that Japanese industries will take root among them.

The Liü-Kiüans have no established religion. The Confucianism introduced, as we have told, by the Chinese, is apparently retained by the upper classes; while Buddhism is favoured by the lower classes. Beecher said they were extremely superstitious; but Dr. Guillemard said he saw nothing to justify such a conclusion. There are a few wayside shrines—stones before which incense is burned and fruit offered, but not in excess.

There are also current tales of fairies and genii, which have a startling resemblance to many both in the "Arabian Nights" and in Teutonic legends. There is, for instance, a story almost identical with that of the Swan-Maiden, as related by Mr. Baring-Gould, in "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages."

The original inhabitants of the islands are supposed to have been of the Malayan race, and the dug-out canoes still in use are analogous to those of the Malay Archipelago. The present language, however, so far as it is known, appears to be closely identified with the Japanese dialect spoken in the province of Satsuma.

According to Dr. Smith, many Chinese terms have been introduced, and the influence of the Chinese colony before mentioned is still seen, both in the language

and in the customs and religious beliefs of the islanders. It is curious that, in writing, the Japanese characters are employed, but in books, the Chinese. In the native phraseology, the Liü-Kiüans call themselves "The Nation that observes propriety."

The largest island of the group is Okiñawa-Sima, but is better known as Great Liü-Kiü. The Archipelago is partially of volcanic origin, and it stretches from north to south over about three degrees of latitude; but is so wholly out of the beaten track of commerce that it has remained so long almost unknown to Europeans. Captain Basil Hall was there some forty years before Commodore Perry, but his visit was a short one, and he has not left anything like so full an account of the place as did the American officer. The latter stayed among the islands for several months, and even concluded a sort of commercial treaty with the Liü-Kiüans.

The island of Okiñawa-Sima is about sixty miles in length and from five to ten in breadth, but the remainder of the group are of very small size. The chief sea-port town is Napha-Kiang, close to the south end of Great Liü-Kiü. The harbour, though small, is surrounded by reefs, and is tolerably safe.

The view on approaching is, according to Dr. Guillemard, decidedly picturesque—Japanese in character, but yet with marked peculiarities, indicating to the traveller quite a new country. On the one side a long battlemented wall guards the entrance to a small river, where a few Japanese junks are berthed while discharging cargo. In front the town is half buried in trees, with the red roofs visible here and there, while a background of low hills completes an effective picture. On the slopes of these hills clumps of bamboos and bananas are to be seen, marking the sites of cottages, while far inland stretch field after field of sprouting and ripening crops in every stage of growth and every shade of green and gold.

The streets of the little town have an odd appearance; the houses are built within compounds, and are separated both from the street and from each other by massive walls, from eight to fourteen feet in height, of great thickness, and sloping outwards at the base like the old castles of Japan. No doubt they were so constructed for defence in the days when the "Nation which observes propriety" occasionally forgot itself, or was assailed by one or other of its big neighbours.

Passing through a narrow door in one of these bastions, the house is seen built of wood and surrounded by a garden of the true Japanese type : little pebbly paths leading to little bridges over little lakes, lighted by little stone lanterns, with little trees clipped into all sorts of quaint and curious shapes. Of chairs and tables there are none; but the floor is piled with plaited mats of rice straw, lying on which the persons of propriety drink tea out of little cups, and smoke Liü-Kiüan tobacco in little pipes.

The Liü-Kiüans are not a race of giants; they are even shorter than the Japanese, but better proportioned. The peasant class are nearly as dark as Malays, doubtless the effect of exposure, for the upper classes are much fairer, and without any of the yellow hue of the Chinaman. They have, indeed, none of the characteristics of the Chinese, and, while like the Japanese, can readily be distinguished from the latter. Their faces are less flattened, their eyes more deeply set, their noses more prominent, their foreheads higher, and their cheek-bones less marked than those of the Japanese. Their expression is gentle and pleasing, but sad; and this, Dr. Guillemard tells us, is a true index of their character.

Many of the men wear beards, which by some are plaited and fixed at the end into a sharp point, à la cosmetique. Both men and women—rich and poor—dress the hair alike, thus : A small space is shaved on the crown, and the rest of the hair, which is allowed to grow long, is gathered and twisted into a knot over the bald spot, is dressed with cosmetique, and then trans-fixed by a couple of hair-pins.

The metal of which these pins are made varies with the rank of the wearer; the lower classes using brass or pewter, and the "literati" and officials silver or gold, according to their position and wealth. The men are rarely tattooed, but the women decorate their hands on the back in elaborate patterns in blue, traced in Indian ink. The design is begun in childhood, but is not completed until marriage. On the wrist they also tattoo a Maltese cross.

A striking feature about Napha-Kiang, is the number of tombs surrounding it. These are built in the sides of the hills and are of a horse-shoe shape. They are in the form of vaults and are constructed of solid masonry. In these vaults the dead are placed and left for seven years, after which the remains are collected and placed in urns. Those who cannot afford to build a tomb for the use of their own relatives

combine with others, so as to have a common place of sepulture of respectable appearance. The finest, however, are interred in holes cut in the sea-cliffs. After burial, supplies of food and rice-spirit are placed in the tomb for the use of the deceased, which the relatives come and consume after a decent interval. The combings of the hair are collected by the priests, and by them burnt on certain occasions as offerings for some purpose or other; but the meaning of the rite has not yet been disclosed.

Once upon a time, the Liü-Kiüans were famous for producing an extremely hard and beautiful deep rich red lacquer, but the production of this seems to be now a lost art.

Liü-Kiü, says Dr. Guillemard, is Japan just as the Liü-Kiüans are to all intents and purposes Japanese, but it is "Japan, with its grotesqueness toned down, and its stiffness softened by six degrees of latitude. The inner recesses of the harbour are indeed as much like a scene in the Malay Archipelago as anything else, and the little azure-blue kingfisher that flitted out from time to time ahead of us, was by no means out of harmony with it, for the bird is cosmopolitan in its habits, and ranges from Africa to New Guinea, and from Japan to Timor. Passing the wooded islet at the harbour's entrance on our return, we came upon a curious scene. A party of half-a-dozen natives had gathered on the bare summit, and facing toward the west, were occupied in some sort of festal or religious ceremonial. The sun was just setting, but the thick banks of cloud gathered above our heads portended a heavy storm. Bathed in a flood of hard light, a solitary figure stood out against the evening sky, slowly waving his hand and dancing an adieu to the day. Behind him sat the others with snake-skin guitars, chanting the weird, yet not unpleasant, discords of some Liü-Kiüan song. Presently the music ceased, and another stepped forward to take the dancer's place. We floated slowly on, half unconsciously, under the spell of the mournful music and the strangeness of the scene we were watching, until both had vanished in distance, and the fast-fading light warned us that we had better return. The piece was ended, and the curtain had fallen, but among many scenes of travel vividly impressed upon my memory, I can recall few more so than the Liü-Kiüan sun-set dance in Napha-Kiang harbour."

Some few miles inland from Napha-

Kiang is Shiüri, the ancient capital of the Kingdom, from which foreigners are jealously excluded. Both Commodore Perry and Dr. Guillemard, however, managed to go there. This is surrounded by walls of heavy masonry—almost Cyclopean in character—upwards of sixty feet in height, and of enormous thickness. The gate is more Chinese than Japanese in character, being a two-storeyed porch, with upturned gables, and supported on four enormous wooden pillars.

In the centre of the enclosure, and on the summit of a low hill, stand the fortress and palace, within three lines of fortifications—the citadel rising into picturesque towers and battlements. The Palace of the Ancient Kings is now dismal enough, a perfect labyrinth of rooms and corridors in a state of dilapidation, bearing every appearance of not having been inhabited for years. A few miles off, however, is another palace, the summer residence of the King, which is well appointed, amid charming scenery, on the shore of a large lotus lake.

There are other remains of ruined castles and fortresses in the islands, which testify alike to the strength and warlike character of the Liu-Kiüans in the days of old. Now, their King is a captive in Japan, and they themselves are content to be governed by that nation. They are, apparently, not a progressive, but a patient, amiable, and industrious people, who, under a benevolent Government, may develop in commercial importance. There is so much about them and their land which is interesting, that one longs to know more; and in these days of travel, when the "globe-trotter" has exhausted all the beaten tracks, some will be glad to hear of this comparatively unbroken ground.

There is a great deal more yet to be learned about the "Nation that observes propriety," and the undoubted physical attractions of the "Madeira of the East" will, it is to be hoped, induce some competent individuals to go and gather up all the threads of their story.

UNCLE BOB'S NIECE.

By LESLIE KEITH.

Author of "*The Chilcootes*," etc.

CHAPTER XII.

A VERY odd and unexpected thing now happened. When the arrangements had all been completed, and in ratification

of the treaty tea had been drunk, cake eaten, and the good-byes said; when the big door had almost been shut on the smile of their hostess; one last suggestion occurred to Uncle Bob. A suggestion, a doubt, a hint, or a request, it matters not; suffice it, that it took him once more up the steps, and recalled the smile that had been dying from Madame Drave's lips.

Tilly, already seated in the carriage, smiled too; half out of sympathy, half out of amusement. The polite Mr. Behrens waited calmly on the pavement till his friend should be ready to set out. It was already dusk, but the lamp above the hall door threw out a cheerful radiance that lit the strip of pavement where Behrens lounged, and fell on the harness of the horses, on the carriage, and on Tilly's bright face.

The street was very quiet, so that one heard two pairs of feet approaching and voices in talk before their respective owners came in sight—two men walking arm-in-arm in the rapidly-growing darkness, that was all. Tilly looked at them carelessly. As they approached the patch of light, one of them detached his arm from his companion's, and took a step in advance.

"Why, Behrens," he said in a pleasant voice, "who would have looked to meet you here? One doesn't expect to see you beyond City bounds."

"Why not?" said Behrens, accepting the proffered hand. "Is there any law why I shouldn't set foot on your happy hunting ground? I am waiting for a friend of mine."

"So I see."

Fred Temple—for it was he—was gazing at the lovely face in the carriage: a beautiful face, soft, bright, and animated.

"I wonder who she is? I wish Behrens would introduce me," he was saying to himself when, still gazing, he noticed the face change. A flush stole over it; a look of surprised pleasure came into the eyes; the lips parted in a little cry; and then, to his bewilderment, his companion and cousin—his stupid, awkward cousin John—actually went forward, and took in his own hand this beautiful girl held out to him.

There was no mistake about it. When John Temple, sauntering on and awaiting Fred's pleasure, came within the circle of light, Tilly had recognised in his the face of an acquaintance. She knew no reason why she should not greet him as a friend;

for as yet, at least, it was the code of Liliesmuir by which she set her behaviour. She was frankly pleased and excited over the little adventure. As for John, his feelings may be imagined.

"I am so glad to have met you again—to explain——"

"I have been hoping to meet you," said John, with an equal simplicity, hardly believing yet in his good fortune. "I have looked for you every day."

"We did not go to Mrs. Popham's."

It was this little scene upon which Mr. Burton stumbled, as he came down the steps full of small cares.

"You will see to that, mem," he was saying. "It's very important. I'm glad I remembered it. I——"

"Uncle Bob," came a clear, ringing voice, "please come here! Oh, uncle," Tilly leant forward, and, putting out a hand, she laid it eagerly on his sleeve—"here is the gentleman who helped us the night of our coming here—you remember, who showed us the way! And you were so sorry you could not tell him that we had gone to live somewhere else."

"Ay, ay," cried Uncle Bob, "to be sure, I remember. And my little lass has been fretting here in case you went to a certain place where you wouldn't get anything but the cold shoulder for your pains." He laughed at the well-worn pleasantry. "Well, well," he put out his large hand and shook the other's heartily, "we'll make up for it now. And, like an old fool, I didn't so much as ask your name."

"Temple—John Temple."

"Temple!" cried uncle and niece in a breath, looking wonderingly at each other. Then Uncle Bob continued alone.

"Are you Scotch?"

"I was born in London; but my mother was Scotch. Her maiden name was the same as yours, I believe, Burton."

John's heart was beating thickly; he found difficulty in articulating; he was almost sure now that his conjecture was right; almost sure by the amazed looks they cast at each other; by the eagerness with which they hung upon his words.

"And what might her christian name be?"

"Jessie."

"Jessie!" Mr. Burton repeated dreamily, "Jessie Burton—Jessie Temple!"

"I have reason to believe—though I am not perfectly certain," John went on, controlling himself as well as he could, and preparing to play his last card, "I believe she came from a village called Liliesmuir."

Now he knew that he was right; knew it by the light that leaped into Tilly's eyes. There was nothing more to fear or dread, unless—horrible doubt!—they refused to own him.

"By jingo!" cried Uncle Bob, waking from a reverie, and slapping his left leg with energy, "this is a rum start! Unless there's some trick here I don't see to the bottom of. You are Jessie's lad, and almost the first man we set eyes on in London!"

Now this conversation was far too interesting, even from the outset, for Fred to maintain the sorriest pretence of listening to the conversation of Behrens. Insensibly he had edged nearer and nearer to the group at the carriage; he now stood close to John's elbow. John, the hero of the hour; John, the despised; taken up by these people, by this beautiful girl, into such a sudden warmth of regard; John, whom nobody ever considered or thought of—here was a strange turn of fortune!

Then slowly, from a word here and a hint there, he gathered that these were the two for whom he had sought so long; that this was the girl of whom he had dreamed, and who had escaped him till she had become indeed but a dream; and it was John who had discovered them—John, who was "Jessie's boy!"

And who, in the name of wonder, was "Jessie," that the old man should speak of her with so strange a catch in his breath? Never before had Master Fred felt so confounded, amazed, so left out.

He had by this time drawn so close, and was pressing so hard on John's elbow, that that good fellow was fain to turn, and, seeing the intruder's eager face, to include him in his own better fortune.

"This is my cousin, and he is a Temple, too," he said.

"So he's a Temple, too," repeated Uncle Bob, in the voice of one whom nothing more will ever have the power to surprise. "Are there any more of you about?"

"I think there are but the two of us," said Fred laughing. "Yes, I'm a Temple, too, and I'm proud if it gives me even a scrap of interest in your thoughts." He looked at Tilly, expecting that she would have extended her hand to him too; but she only gazed at him wonderingly, with no recognition in her eyes. "It's an immense piece of good fortune for me to meet you," he went on, "for I've been looking for you everywhere."

"You've been looking for us, too," said

Mr. Burton with an air of exhausted wonder. "This beats everything to fits. Well, we can't stop here all night. You'll come, both of you, and take a bit of dinner with us, and we'll 'redd' this up before morning, or my name's not Bob Burton. You won't leave us, Behrens," he decided; for that polite gentleman, who had been a silent spectator of this strange scene, was about to withdraw from this odd family gathering. "Nonsense, man, there's room for us all. Sit close, Tilly, and we'll manage."

"We couldn't think of crowding you," said Fred, always spokesman. "If you will give us the address of your hotel we'll join you by train. The station is close at hand; we'll be there as soon as you." And having obtained the information, after a further protest from Uncle Bob, and further polite hesitation, quickly combated, from Mr. Behrens, he actually dragged John away, determined that he should enjoy no superior advantage, though he was "Jessie's son."

On the way to the hotel he extracted every morsel of information that could be drawn from his cousin.

John, plied with questions and adjurations, yielded at last, and repeated the little story in full detail, from his encounter with the strangers in the refreshment-rooms to his own midnight investigations into the family history.

Fred, still struggling with a vague sense of injury, yet felt compelled to laugh.

"That you should find the people I've been searching for all over London! Was it in hopes of seeing them you were hanging about the Popham establishment that night?" he questioned suddenly.

"I understood that they were staying there."

"Well, if you had only spoken up we might have found them ever so much sooner," said Fred with petulance. "I can't think what you kept it dark for."

"I don't see that it can matter so much to you," retorted John, goaded into some show of resentment. "After all, they're not your cousins, and as Mrs. Popham's friendship has waited so long, I suppose it can exist one night longer."

It was herein that the sting lay. It was John, canny, quiet John who was the nephew, and not gay, ornamental Fred. Yet the kinship, if it could be proved, was clearly on the Burton side, and the sole advantage of being a Temple was apparently the distinction of relationship with John.

Here was a nice turning of the tables for Fred, who had always rather prided himself on his good-nature in befriending the silent clerk of Fulham. Had he not that very night, when this strange encounter took place, been on his way to introduce John to all the glories of Mrs. Popham's brilliant drawing-room; the charms of her society; the privileges of her afternoon tea?

Matters took a rather more favourable complexion for the injured Fred when they reached the hotel. Mr. Burton received them alone, Behrens having had the tact to absent himself from this family reunion, and it did not appear from his manner that he was overwhelmed with delight at the sudden apparition of his nephew.

If this pair had been actors on a comic stage, they would doubtless have fallen upon each other's necks and wept upon each other's shoulders; being Britons, and one of them at least a North Briton, they contented themselves with shaking hands rather awkwardly and looking at each other with covert, exploring glances. Mr. Burton had few questions to ask, and John few details to communicate, but these were convincing enough. John produced his mother's wedding-ring, which hung at his watch-chain. Inside the narrow, old-fashioned circle of gold the initials of husband and wife and the date of their wedding were engraved.

"Ay, it's Jessie's ring, sure enough," said Uncle Bob, handing it back after his examination. "I remember her showing me the letters; it was a new-fangled notion in those days—it was little enough of pleasure she got out of life after she wore it. Your father was a bad lot. It was an ill day for her when he set foot in Lilliesmuir—a handsome chap, not like you; you favour the Burtons"—he seemed to find a faint satisfaction in this fact—"a handsome chap with a tongue that would wile a bird off a tree, but a black-hearted villain all the same."

John flushed deeply.

"Whatever his faults, he was my father," he said. "I, at least, must keep silence about him. And if my mother suffered, as I fear she did, her friends, so far as I can make out, did nothing to comfort her."

"She made her bed and she had to lie on it," said her brother, doggedly. "And she was always a proud, high-hearted lass. She would never let on that she had made a mistake."

"And yet my recollections of her are all of a woman whose spirit was broken with sorrow and loneliness."

"Well, well," said Uncle Bob, heavily, waving his hand as if he would dismiss the subject. "How many are there of you?" he asked abruptly.

"Two."

"Boy or girl, the other one?"

"A girl, younger than I. I am twenty-six, and Jessie—she is named from my mother—is twenty-three. She is a confirmed invalid."

"Tilly must go and see her," he said; and that was all.

The interview, in which Fred had shared, keeping a modest silence and holding himself aloof from the two in the embrasure of a window, had some elements of comfort in it for his wounded spirit. And when Uncle Bob, finding nothing more at the moment to say to his new-found relation, strayed to the window, Fred was ready to make himself gracious to the old man, sore with the rough awakening of ill-healed wounds.

"You must be the doctor's son," he said to Fred, looking at him with more favour than he had bestowed on John.

"I am the doctor's son."

"Ah," said Uncle Bob with a half-drawn breath. "I never heard any ill of him."

"I hope you never will!" said Fred, and then—not anxious to be catechised in his turn—he lightly turned the talk. With the tact of which he could be master on occasion, he subtly drew on his host to speak of his roving life and unwonted fortunes. Here was a subject that held no wounding memories, no smart for conscience or heart; a subject that was truly congenial and delightful. The man who among his comrades had gone by the name of 'Lucky Bob,' had nothing but a triumphant, innocent pride in his own gigantic successes; he was ready for the hundredth or the thousandth time to tell the tale anew; to relive his life from its small beginnings to its present pinnacle of glory.

"It was all for the little lass at home," he was saying, when the door opened and Tilly entered.

If the truth must be told, Tilly had refrained from appearing earlier, because of the feminine necessity of making a toilet. The young men had been excused their morning costume; but their reasons did not apply to her, and every young woman, at least, will applaud her, for thus signalling this great occasion. Cousins, and especially

young men cousins, about whom one has woven pleasant imaginations, are not to be met and hailed, and taken to the family bosom every day; and surely one ought to take a little trouble to show that one wishes to be friendly and is pleased? If it had been the six young women Temples of her fancy instead of one young man—or was it two young men?—perhaps Tilly would not have lingered quite so long at her glass, or so questioningly asked it if she were really pretty, or if it were a fond delusion of dear old Uncle Bob's? If she had any fear on this point, the looks of both young men ought to have reassured her. She had chosen her dress with some care and with nice discrimination to suit the occasion, not too dowdy, nor yet too gorgeous; but if her only object had been to set off and adorn her own fairness, she could not have succeeded better. It was a gown of pale blue—the colour, as every one knows, for fair hair and cheeks of the wild rose—and it hung about her in soft and sinuous folds, which showed off all her slim grace.

The cousins looked at her with delight and admiration; John jumped up from his chair, and Fred sprang forward to fetch her another. She took neither, but stood smiling between the young men.

"You are my cousin. My cousin John Temple," she said to the one. "You and my uncle have settled that satisfactorily, I hope, and put it beyond doubt?"

"I think so; I hope so."

"I am glad," she said simply.

"And you," she turned to the other, "are you my cousin too?"

"I must be," said Fred eagerly. "I don't see how there can be any doubt about it. This fellow is your cousin, as we have just conclusively proved, and he is my cousin also, therefore what can be plainer than that you and I are cousins as well? That is sound logic, isn't it?"

"I don't know anything about logic," said Tilly smiling. "I am afraid the fact only amounts to this—that you are my cousin's cousin."

"But in Scotland, I understand that is considered quite a near tie."

"But we are in England."

"I see you won't own me," said Fred with melancholy. "What shall I do to qualify myself, Miss Burton? I am sure if you would allow me, I could make out a case."

"Oh, I won't hinder you," said Tilly, smiling frankly. "I never had any cousins till now, for what is the good of having

them if you don't know them, or anything about them? My uncle, it seems, was a Temple."

"And he was my father's brother." Fred had never before in the course of his life felt anxious to own this reprobate kinsman's claim.

"But then it is after all on the Burton side that we are related. Your mother—" she looked at John.

"My mother was a Burton—your uncle's and your father's sister."

"So you see," she appealed smilingly to Fred.

"No," he said with gay defiance, "I don't see, and I won't see. Let us leave the matter for to-night, at least; let us stop short at the Temples."

"Very well." Tilly glanced at her uncle, still standing with his back to them, lost once more in the past as he stared unseeingly into the darkness. "To-night we shall go no further; we shall leave the genealogical tree in doubt, if you like. After all, it was the Temples I always wanted to meet, and hoped to meet, when I came to London. And now I want to hear about them," she turned to John, and this time she took the seat he again silently offered.

"Do you know what I made up my mind to expect, when I met my cousins?" she asked.

"No," he replied, smiling. There was another chair near, and he leaned his arms on the back of it and looked down at her. "Will you tell me?"

"Confound him, with his easy, intimate air!" said Fred to himself. To see John adopting his own manner before his own eyes was too much for this jealous young gentleman.

"Well," said Tilly, "I reckoned on six girls. Am I right or wrong?"

"Wrong by five," said John, laughing.

"There aren't eleven?" questioned Tilly, in a voice in which politeness and dismay struggled together. "Eleven girls! Why, it must be like a school!"

"There is only one," said John, "there never were more than Jessie and me; and she, poor girl, has a struggle to keep in life at all."

"Is she ill?" Tilly asked with sympathy.

"I am sorry. Will she not get well?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Dear me," she said; "when I thought of those six Temple girls, I always fancied them very big and strong—great walkers and riders, and all that. And now it is I who will have to take care of this poor little cousin of mine. And you?" she turned suddenly to Fred, who was listening moodily.

"I have nobody," he said, "not even a charming sister Jessie, like this fortunate fellow here; but I have one little claim which I am bold enough to press, Miss Burton, my friendship for a lady who is a great friend of yours—who is thinking of you at this moment, and longing to hear of you. I am afraid she would never forgive me, if she discovered that I had spent a whole evening in your company without letting her know that you were found."

"A friend of mine?" said Tilly, looking puzzled. "I know no one here except Miss Walton, and she knows where to find me."

"Have you forgotten Mrs. Popham?"

She looked at him steadily, flashing a little, and then her glance wandered to the window where her uncle still stood silent, his gaze absently fixed on the hurry of the gas-lit street; his mind busy with old scenes, long forgotten.

"We do not know Mrs. Popham," she said in low, but clear, tones. "It is a mistake. She is not a friend of ours."

She got up with that, and crossed the room, and going up to the old man at the window, she put her hand within his arm, and leaned her cheek for a moment in mute caress against his sleeve. It was a pretty action, because it was so spontaneous and unconscious. She had forgotten that they might be looking at her.

"Aren't you getting hungry, dear?" she said.

He looked down on her with a start, and repeated with an effort:

"Hungry? Yes, to be sure; there are these two young fellows and Behrens—" he turned round, and becoming, at last, fully alive to their presence, he said to John, with a nod, "You just ring and hurry them up, will you? I ordered something for ourselves downstairs."

Unlucky Fred! by what malign chance had he blundered? His dinner was spoiled for him before it was eaten.

THE HOLY ROSE.

By WALTER BESANT,

AUTHOR OF

"ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN," "THE REVOLT OF MAN," "LET NOTHING YOU DISMAY;"

AND JOINT AUTHOR OF

"READY-MONEY MORTIBOY," "THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY," "THE CHAPLAIN OF THE FLEET," "OVER THE SEA WITH THE SAILOR," "WHEN THE SHIP COMES HOME," "THE CAPTAINS' ROOM," ETC., ETC.

THE EXTRA CHRISTMAS NUMBER OF **ALL THE YEAR ROUND.**
CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

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THE HOLY ROSE.

PROLOGUE.

ALL night long, until within a couple of hours of daybreak, the ships' boats were rowing to and fro between the fleet and the shore, swiftly, yet without haste, as if the work had to be done without delay, yet must be done in order. They were embarking the English and the Spanish troops, for the town was to be abandoned. All night long the soldiers stood in their ranks, waiting for their turn in stolid patience. Some even slept leaning on their muskets, though the season was mid-winter, and though all round them there was such a roaring of cannon, and such a bursting and hissing of shells, as should have driven sleep far away. But the cannon roared and the shells burst harmlessly, so far as the soldiers were concerned, for they were drawn up in the Fort Lamalque, which is on the east of the town, while the cannonading was from Fort Caire, which is on the west. The Republicans fired, not upon the embarking army, but upon the town and upon the boats in the harbour, where the English sailors were destroying those of the ships which they could not take away with them, so that what had been a magnificent fleet in the evening became by the morning only a poor half-dozen frigates. They burned the arsenal; they destroyed the stores; not until the work of destruction was complete, and all the

troops were embarked, did they turn their thoughts to the shrieking and panic-stricken people.

What do we, who all our lives have sat at home in peace and quietness, know of such a night? What do we, who, so far, have lived beyond the reach of war, comprehend of such terror as fell upon all hearts when—'twas the night of the eighteenth of December, in the year of grace one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three—the people of Toulon discovered that the English and Spanish troops were leaving the town, and that they were left to the tender mercies of the Republicans? Toulon was their last camp of refuge; Lyons had fallen; Marseilles had fallen. As the English gathered together in the fens and swamps to escape the Normans, so the Provençal folk fled to Toulon out of the way of the Republicans. As for their tender mercies, it was known already what had been done at Lyons, and what at Marseilles. What would they not do at Toulon, which had not only pronounced against the Republic, but had even invited the English and the Spanish to occupy and hold the town? And now their allies were embarking, and they were without defence.

It took time for them to understand the situation. They did not learn that Fort Caire and the Pharon had been taken by the Republicans, until the cannon of the forts were turned upon the town, and the bombardment began. Then they ran out of their houses, because it is better to die in the open than to die in a hole, and con-

gregated—some in the churches, some in the Place d'Armes, and some on the quays. It was dreadful, even there, because the shells which flew hurtling in the air sometimes burst over their heads, and the cannon-shot sometimes flew through the crowd, making long lanes where the dead and wounded lay. It was more dreadful when the English sailors fired the arsenal and the stores, and the lurid flames leaped up into the sky, and roared and ran from place to place. It was more dreadful still when the lubberly Spaniards blew up the powder-ships instead of sinking them, and that with so terrible an explosion that the boats in the harbour were blown clean out of the water. But it was most dreadful of all when it became known that the English had abandoned the town, and were even then embarking at Fort Lamalque, where they were secure from the fire of the other forts; because then the people understood that they would be left to certain death.

Then with one consent they rushed upon the Quai. The women carried their little ones and dragged the elder children by the hand; the men snatched up whatever, in the terror of the moment, they could save that seemed worth saving, and there, crowded all together, they shrieked and cried to the English boats, and implored the sailors to carry them on board.

All night long they vainly cried, the men cursing the English for their inhumanity, the women holding up the children—for the flames of the arsenal made the Quai as light as day—if the sight of the tender innocents would move their hearts. All night long the sailors, unmoved, went on with their work of destruction in the harbour, and of embarkation on the fleet. But in the early morning, two hours before daybreak, they had done all that they had time to do, and they thought of the wretched people.

When the boats touched the Quai there arose a desperate cry, for it seemed here indeed, as with those who of old time stood or lay about the Pool of Siloam, that only he who stepped in first would come out whole. Then those behind pushed to the front, and those in front leaped into the boats, and some in their haste leaped into the water instead and were drowned; and, to make the terror worse, the *forçats*, who had been released when the arsenal was fired, came down upon the crowd, six hundred strong, yelling, "The Republicans are upon us! They are coming! They are coming!" Then even those who had been

most patient, fearing above all things to lose each other, and resolved to cling to their treasures if possible, either lost their heads and rushed forward, or were forced to the front by those behind and separated; and in the confusion they dropped their treasures, which the convicts picked up. And some were pushed into the water, and some, especially the women and children, were thrown down and trampled to death; and at this moment the cannon-shot of Fort Caire fell into the densest part of the crowd. And some went mad, and began to laugh and sing, and one or two fell dead with the terror and distraction of it. But the English sailors went on steadily with their work, helping the people into the boats, and when those were full pushing off and making room for others, as if they were Portsmouth wherries taking holiday folk to see the ships at Spithead; so that, although at daybreak they were forced to desist, out of twenty thousand souls who were in Toulon, they took on board, all told, fourteen thousand five hundred men, women, and children.

Among the groups on the outskirts of the crowd there was one of four, consisting of two ladies, a man, and a boy. One of the ladies sat upon the arm of an anchor, holding the boy by the hand. She had stuffed his ears with wool and covered his head with her shawl, so that he should see and hear as little as possible. The other, who stood by her, was dressed as a nun. In her hands she held a golden crucifix, and her eyes were turned to the heavens. The man stood silent, only from time to time whispering to the lady with the boy:

"We can die but once, Eugénie. Courage, my wife."

Then came the false alarm of the *forçats*, and a surging wave of humanity suddenly rushed upon them, bearing them along upon the tide. And as for the lady called Eugénie, she was carried off her feet, but held the boy in her arms, and knew nothing until the strong hands of two English sailors caught her as she was falling headlong into the water, crying:

"Now then, Madam Parleyvoo, this is your way; not into the harbour this time. Lay down, ma'am; lay down, and sit quiet."

When it was daybreak, the refugees upon the deck looked around them. They were seeking for brother and sister, husband, wife, lover, parent, or child; with them Madame Eugénie. Alas! the husband was nowhere on the ship. They

comforted her with the hope that he might be on one of the other vessels. But she was to see him no more. Presently her eyes fell upon a figure lying motionless beside a cannon on the deck. It was a nun, in blue and white.

"Sister!" cried Madame Eugénie; "Sister Claire! You are saved; oh, you are saved."

The nun slowly opened her eyes, looking about her.

"I thought," she said, "that we had passed through the pangs of death, and were on our way to the gates of heaven." The terror of the night had made her reason wander for the moment. "Where are we, sister?"

"We are safe, dear. But where—oh, where is Raymond?"

"I know not. What has happened? What have I here?"

In her hand she carried a bag.

I have said that in the hurry of the moment each snatched up what seemed most precious. This lady, for her part, held in her hand a large leather bag, containing something about eighteen inches long. If we consider how weak a woman she was, in what a crowd she was pressed, how she was carried into the boat and hoisted on board, and how her wits fled for terror, it seems nothing short of a miracle that she should have brought that bag on board in safety. But she did, and thus a miracle, she always believed, was wrought in behalf of her and those she loved.

She sat up and began to recover herself.

"Oh, my sister!" she said, bursting into tears, "you are safe; and I have saved the Rose, the Holy Rose, the Rose blessed by the Pope."

"And I," said Eugénie, "have lost my husband. Thank God, the boy is safe. But where is Raymond?"

Then followed the sound of a fierce cannonading; the last, because the Republicans now discovered that the place was abandoned.

The nun kissed the crucifix.

"Those who are not with us," she said, solemnly, "are with God. If they are not dead already, they will be presently killed by those who are the enemies of God and the King. Let us pray, my sister, for the souls of the martyrs."

In the afternoon of that day, the English and Spanish ships being now under full sail and out of sight, there was the strangest sight that the Toulonnais had ever

seen. The performance took place in the Place d'Armes, under the trees which, in summer, make a grateful shade in the hot sun. Generally there is a market there, which begins at daybreak, and is carried on lazily, and with many intervals for sleep and rest, until the evening. But to-day the market-women were not at their stalls, and the stalls were empty. The smoke of the still-burning arsenal was blowing slowly over the town, obscuring the sky; some of the ships in the harbour were still on fire, adding their smoke, so that, though the sky was clear and the sun was bright, the town was dark. Under the trees at the western end of the Place, sat four Commissioners, forming four courts. They were dressed in Republican simplicity of long flowing hair, long coats with high collars, and their throats tied up in immense mufflers. They were provided with chairs, and they were surrounded by a guard of soldiers. The fellows were in rags, and for the most part barefooted; but every man had his musket, his bayonet, and his pouch. They carried nothing more. Their hair was longer than that of the Commissioners; their cheeks were hollow, partly from short rations long continued, and partly from the fatigues of the last week's incessant fighting. And their eyes were fierce; as fierce as the eyes of those Gauls who first met a Roman legion. In the open part of the Place, where there were no trees to shelter them, were grouped together a company of prisoners, driven together at the point of the bayonet. They were the helpless and unresisting folk who had been left behind by the retreating English. The men stood silent and resigned, or, if they spoke, it was to console the women, who, for their part, worn out by terror and fatigue, sat as if they could neither hear, nor see, nor feel anything at all, not even the wailing of the children.

At the east end of the Place were more soldiers, and these were engaged in turn, by squads of six, in standing shoulder to shoulder and firing at a target which was continually changed.

A strange occupation, surely, for soldiers of the Republic! For the target at which they aimed, at ten feet distance, was by turns a man, a woman, or a child, as might happen. They always hit that target, which then fell to the ground, and became instantly white and cold, and was dragged away to be replaced by another.

For the Republic, revengeful as well as

indivisible, was executing Justice upon her enemies. With this Republic, which was naturally more ruthless, because less responsible, than any Tyranny, Justice was always spelt with a capital, and meant Death. So exactly was Justice at this time a synonym for *La Mort*, that one is surprised that the latter word should have survived at all during the early years of Revolution, when the thing was signified equally well by the word Justice. The judges here were those pure and holy spirits, Citizens Fréron, Robespierre the Younger, Barras, and Saliceti, all virtuous men, and all fully permeated with a conviction of the great truth, that when a man is dead he can plot no more. Therefore, as fast as the traitors of Toulon, who had held out for the family of Capet, and had invited the detestable and perfidious English into their city, and had been contented with their rule, were brought before them, they were sentenced to be done to death incontinently, and without any foolish delay in the investigation of the case, or in appeals to any higher court, or any waste of time over prayers and priest.

Presently, there was brought before Citizen Fréron a Gentleman. There could be no doubt upon this subject, because, even at this moment, when the result of his trial was certain, he preserved the proud and self-possessed air which exasperated the Republicans, who easily succeeded in looking fearless and resolute, but never preserved calmness. It wants a very well-bred man to possess his soul and govern himself with dignity in the presence of a violent death. When it came to the turn of the Robespierres, for example, one of them jumped out of window, and the other shot himself in the head. Yet in the dignity of the Nobles the fiery Republicans read contempt for themselves, and it maddened them. This gentleman was a handsome man of five-and-thirty, or thereabouts, with straight and regular features, black eyes, and a strong chin. You may see his face carved upon those sarcophagi of Arles, where are sculptured a whole gallery of Roman heads belonging to the second century. It was, in fact, a Roman face such as may be seen to this day at Tarascon, Aiguesmortes, and Arles; a clear-cut face, whose ancestor was very likely some gallant legionary born in the Campagna, who, his years of service accomplished, was left behind, grizzled

and weather-beaten, but strong still, to settle in the Provincia, to marry one of the black-haired, half-breed Gaulish maidens, to bring up his family, presently to die, and then to be remembered for another generation at least in the yearly commemorative Festival of the Dead.

"Your name?" asked Commissioner Fréron.

There were no clerks, and no notes were taken of the cases. But certain formalities must be observed in the administration of justice.

"My name is Raymond d'Arnault, Comte d'Eyragues," the prisoner replied in a clear, ringing voice.

"You have been found in the town which for two months has harboured and entertained the enemies of the Republic. You were on the Quai, endeavouring to escape. Why were you endeavouring to escape?"

The prisoner made no reply.

"Friends of the Republic do not fly before the presence of her soldiers. What have you to say?"

"Nothing," said the prisoner.

"Is there any present who can give evidence as to the accused?" asked the President.

A man stepped forward.

"I can give evidence, Citizen Commissioner."

He was a man, still young, whose face bore certain unmistakeable signs denoting an evil life. Apparently his courses had led him to a condition of poverty, for his clothes were old and shabby. His coat, which had once been scarlet, was now stained with all the colours that age and rough treatment can add to the original colour; its buttons had formerly been of silver, but were now of horn; his hair was tied with a greasy black ribbon; his shoes had no buckles, and were tied with string; his stockings were of a coarse yarn. As he stepped to the front, he seemed to avoid looking at the prisoner.

Some of those who assisted at the trial might have noticed a strange thing. The man was curiously like the prisoner. They were both of the same stature; each of them had black eyes and black hair; each of them had a shapely head and strong, regular features. But the face of one was noble, and that of the other was ignoble, which makes a great difference to begin with. And one was calm in his manner though death stared him in the face; and the other, though nobody accused him of anything, was uneasy.

"What is your name?" asked the Court.

"My name, Citizen Commissioner, is Louis Leroy."

At these words there was a murmur among all who heard them, and the Court itself showed its displeasure.

"It is my name," said the witness. "A man does not make his own name."

"Citizen, your name is an insult to the Republic."

"I will change it, then, for any other name you please."

"What is your profession, citizen?"

"I am"—he hesitated for a moment—

"I am a dancing-master at Aix."

"A dancing-master may be a good citizen. As for your name, it shall be Gavotte—Citizen Gavotte. For your first name, it shall be no longer Louis, but Scipio. Proceed, Citizen Scipio Gavotte, and quickly. Do you know the accused?"

"I have known him all my life."

"What can you tell the Court about him?"

"He is an aristocrat and a Royalist, therefore the enemy of the Republic; also a devout Catholic, therefore the enemy of mankind."

"What is his business in the city of Toulon? Why is he found here?"

"He was one of those who invited the English into the town. It was thought that Marseilles, Lyons, and Toulon would all hold out together, and be three centres for rallying the Royalists. The Count was strong in favour of English intervention."

"Have you anything further to depose, Citizen Gavotte?" asked the Court.

"Nothing more."

"Accused, have you anything to ask the witness?"

"Nothing," replied the Count.

"Citizen Arnault," said the President, "you have heard the evidence. You are charged with inviting the enemies of the Republic to insult with their presence the sacred soil of the Republic; you have delivered into their hands the fleets of France; you have destroyed the arsenals and the munitions of war. Have you anything to urge in defence?"

"Nothing."

"You admit the charge, then?"

"I admit the charge. It is quite true. I would not willingly waste the time of this honourable Court. There are many hundreds of honest people waiting their turn to be treated as you treated the people of Lyons. I have nothing more to say."

"Death!" said Commissioner Fréron.

The Count heard the sentence with a slight bow. Then the soldiers led him away to the other end of the Place, where the prisoners already sentenced were gathered together waiting their turn, men and women. As for the former, they affected indifference; but the women, with clasped hands and white faces, gazed into the light of day, which they were to see no more; and some hung upon the shoulders of husband or lover; and some sat together, their arms about each other's necks, whispering that they should not be separated for many moments, and that the pang of death was momentary.

The Count spoke to no one; but he turned his head slowly, surveying the scene as if it was a very curious and interesting spectacle, full of odd and amusing details, which he would not willingly forget. The ragged soldiers, the mock dignity of the Court, seemed to amuse him. But among those who stood among the soldiers, he suddenly observed the fellow who had given evidence against him. He was crouching in the crowd, his eyes aglow with hatred and eagerness to see the carrying out of the sentence. With a gesture of authority the Count beckoned him. The man, perhaps from force of habit, obeyed. So for a moment they stood face to face. Truly, they were so much like each other that you might have taken them for brothers.

"Louis," said the Count, speaking as one speaks to a dependant or a humble friend, "it needed not thy testimony, my friend. I was already sentenced. Pity that I could not die without finding out that you were my enemy—you."

The man said nothing.

"Why, Louis, why?" the Count continued. "We were boys together; once we were playfellows. I loved thee in the old days, before thy wild ways broke thy mother's heart. It was not I, but my father, who bade thee begone from the village for a vaurien. Why, then, Louis?"

"Your name and your estate should have belonged to me, and gone to my son. I was born before you, though my mother was not married to—your father."

"Indeed!" said the Count coldly. "So this rankled, did it? Poor Louis! I never suspected it. Yet my death will not undo the past. Louis, I shall be shot, but thou wilt not inherit the name or the estate."

"I shall buy the estate," said the man. "Estates of émigrés and traitors can be

bought for nothing in these times; so that after all the elder brother will inherit."

"And yet, Louis, 'tis pity; because thy brother's death will now be laid to thy charge. There can be, methinks, little joy for one who murders his brother."

The man's face flushed.

"What do I care?" he said. "Go to be shot, and when you fall, remember that the vineyards and the olive-groves will be mine—the property of the brother who was sent away in disgrace, to be a gambler, a poet, a dancing-master—anything."

"My brother," the Count replied, "thou hast changed thy name. It is no longer Leroy, nor Gavotte, but Cain. Farewell, brother, enjoy the estates and be happy."

He dismissed him with a gesture cold and disdainful.

"Enjoy thy estates, Cain."

Citizen Gavotte slunk back; but he waited on the Place watching, until his brother fell.

Meantime the Commissioners of the Republic continued to administer justice, and the file of soldiers continued to execute it, and every man and woman had his fair turn and no favour, which the Republic always granted to its prisoners; and each one, when his turn came, stood before the pointed muskets, and then fell heavily, white of cheek, his heart beating no longer, upon the stones.

When Justice was thoroughly satisfied, which took several days, and the remnant of the Toulonnais was reduced to slender proportions, they threw the bodies into the Mediterranean, where they lie to this day.

CHAPTER I. IN MY GARDEN.

THE village of Porchester is a place of great antiquity, but it is little, and, except for its old Castle, of no account. Its houses are all contained in a single street, beginning at the Castle gate and ending long before you reach the Portsmouth and Fareham road, which is only a quarter of a mile from the Castle. Most of them are mere cottages, with thatched or red-tiled roofs, but they are not mean or squalid cottages; the folk are well-to-do, though humble, and every house in the village, small or great, is covered all over, back and front, with climbing roses. The roses cluster over the porches, they climb over the red tiles; they peep into the latticed windows, they cover and almost hide the chimney. In the summer months the air is heavy with their perfume; every cottage

is a bower of roses; the flowers linger sometimes far into the autumn, and come again with the first warm days of June. Nowhere in the country, I am sure, though I have seen few other places, is there such a village for roses. Apart from its flowers I confess that the place has little worthy of notice; it cannot even show a church, because its church is within the Castle walls, and quite hidden from the village.

On a certain afternoon of April, in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and two, the colour of the leaves was just beginning to show on the elms, the buds were swollen in the chestnuts, the blossom was out on the almond, and the hedges were already green. The sunshine was so warm that one could bring one's work out to the porch, with a shawl round the neck; the village was not quiet, and yet it was peaceful; that is to say, there were the ordinary sounds which are expected, and therefore do not annoy. The children were playing and shouting, the soldiers were disputing outside the tavern door, the village blacksmith and his two apprentices were hammering something on a tuneful anvil, which rang true at every stroke like a great bell; the barber was flouring a wig at the open door, and whistling through his teeth over the job, as a groom whistles while he rubs down a horse; a flock of geese walked along the road croaking and calling to each other; a dog barked after his sheep, keeping them in order, and the cobbler sitting in his doorway was singing aloud while he cut the leather, adjusted it, and hammered it into place. Sometimes he sang out merrily, sometimes he sang low. This was according as the work went easily and to his liking, or the contrary. 'Twas a rogue who always had some merry ditty in his mouth, and to-day it was the famous ale-house song which begins:

I've cheated the parson, I'll cheat him again;
For why should the rogue have one pig in ten?

One pig in ten,
One pig in ten,

Why should the rogue have one pig in ten?

Here something interrupted his song and his work, but immediately afterwards he went on again:

One pig in ten,
One pig in ten,

Why should the rogue have one pig in ten?

When I had resolved to write down my history, and was considering how best to relate it, there came into my

mind, quite unexpectedly, a single afternoon. At first there seemed no reason why this day more than any other should be remembered. Yet the memory of it is persistent, and has so forced itself upon me that every moment of it now stands out as clear and distinct before my eyes as if it were painted on canvas. Perhaps in the world to come we shall have the power and the will to recall day by day the whole of our lives, and so be enabled to live each moment again, and as often as we please and as long as we please. I confess that I am so poorly endowed with spiritual gifts, that I should desire nothing better than to prolong at will the blessed years of love and happiness with my husband (who, to be sure, has never ceased to be my lover) and my children. But Madam Claire (who was never married) says that the joys of our earthly life will appear to us hereafter as poor, unworthy things, and that subjects of more holy contemplation will be provided for us which will more fitly occupy our thoughts. That may be so, and if anyone now living in this world should know aught of the next it is Madam Claire, a saint, though a Roman Catholic, and formerly a nun. Still, for one who has tasted the joys of earthly love and been a mother of children, the memory of these, or their renewal, would seem enough happiness for ever and ever. Amen.

The day which came into my head is that day in spring of which I have just spoken. The porch in which I was sitting belonged to a house in a great garden, which stretched back from the village street. The garden was full of everything which can grow in this country. Apple and pear-trees were trained in frames beside the beds. These were bare as yet, except for the cabbages, but in a month or two they would be green with peas and beans, asparagus, lettuce, and everything else of green herbs that is good for food. There were glass frames for cucumbers and melons; a great glass house for grapes and peaches; there was quite a forest of raspberry canes, gooseberry and currant bushes; and there was an orchard full of fruit-trees, apples of the choicest kinds, such as the golden pippin, the ribston and king pippin, and the golden russet; there were also pears, Windsor and jargonelle, plums and damsons, cherries and mulberries, Siberian crab and medlar. Again, if the beds were full of vegetables, the narrow edges were planted with all kinds of herbs good for the still-room and for medicines—such as lavender for the

linen, to take away the nasty smell of the soap; the tall tansy for puddings; thyme, parsley, mint, fennel, and sage for the kitchen; rosemary, marjoram, southernwood, feverfew, sweetbriar, for medicines and strong waters. Among the herbs flourished, though not yet in bloom, such flowers as will grow without trouble, such as double stocks, carnations, gillyflowers, crocus, lily-of-the-valley, bachelors'-buttons, mignonette, nasturtium, sunflower, monkshood, lupins, and tall hollyhocks. In short, it was, and is still, a beautiful, bounteous, and generous garden, the equal and like of which I have never seen.

The house stood in one corner of the garden, its gable-end turned to the road. Like all the houses in the village, it was covered with roses, and, except the Vicarage, it was the most considerable house in the place. It was of red brick, and had a porch in the front, facing a broad lawn, which served for a bowling-green. The porch was of wood, painted white, and was so broad that there was a bench on either side, where one could be sheltered from north and east winds. At the back of the house a brick wall marked one boundary of our land. It was an ancient broad wall, with no stint of red bricks, such as I love, and covered with moss and lichen—green, grey, red, and yellow. In the places where the mortar had fallen out grew pellitory and green rue, while the top of the wall was bright with yellow stonecrop, tall grasses, and wallflowers already in blossom. The wall ran from the road to within a short distance of high-water mark, where it was succeeded by a wooden paling. Thus our garden was bounded on three sides by road, wall, and sea; on the fourth side it was separated from the Castle by a field of coarse grass, growing in tufts and tall bents. Under the shelter of the brick wall was a row of bee-hives; a mighty humming they made in summer evenings, and a profitable thing was their honey when it came in, for, of all living creatures, the sailor has the sweetest tooth.

There is always work to do, and someone doing it, in this great garden all the year round. This afternoon the boys were busy among the beds. Sally stood over them, rope's-end in hand, but more for ornament and the badge of office, as the bo's'n carries his cane, than for use, though every boy in our employment had tasted of that rope's-end. Her father, sitting on a wheelbarrow, had a broom in his hand and a pipe in his mouth, thus giving his countenance, so to

speaking, to the boys' work. To look at him you would have thought that his working days were now over and done, so wrinkled was his face and so bent his shoulders. Yet he was only seventy-five, and lived for twenty years longer.

He it was who managed the boat, taking her down the creek every morning, summer and winter, wet or dry, fair weather or foul, high tide or low. Every sailor in the King's ships knew the boat and the old man, commonly called Daddy, who rowed or sailed her; and every sailor knew Porchester Sal, the bumboat-woman, who came alongside in the morning with a boat-load of everything belonging to the season; who knew all the young gentlemen, and even had a word for the first lieutenant. As for the tars, she freely talked with them in their own language, and a rough language that is. She would also, it was said, drink about with any of them, and, in the cold mornings, when the air was raw, smoked a pipe of tobacco in the boat. At this time she was five-and-forty years of age, and single. She dressed in all seasons alike, in a sailor's jacket, with a short petticoat and great waterman's boots. For head-gear she never wore anything but a thick thread cap, tied tightly to her head; round her neck was a red woollen wrapper, the ends tucked under the jacket. Her face was as red and weather-beaten as any sailor's, her hands were as rough and hard; and I verily believe that her arms were as strong with the daily handling of the oars, the carrying of the baskets, the digging, weeding, and planting of the garden, and the correction of the boys.

This garden was my own, mine inheritance, bequeathed to me by my mother's father, and a providential bequest it proved. The boat was my own. Daddy and Sally were my own, I suppose, for they belonged to the garden. And they sold for us, on board the ship or in the town, the fruits and vegetables in due season. They also prepared and sold to the purveyors of ships' stores, and for those who sold smuggled tea secretly—there are many such in Portsmouth—a great quantity of leaves picked by the boys from the sloe, ash, and elm trees, dried ready for mixing with the real tea. And Sally also grew for the herbalists a great quantity of plants for those concoctions which some people think better than any doctors' stuff.

We had not always lived in Porchester. We lived, when I first remember anything, in a great house in Bloomsbury Square,

close to Bedford House. Here we had footmen and a coach, and were, as my father daily in after years reminded me, very great people indeed, he being nothing less than an Alderman. "But, my dear," he was wont to say, "I persuaded myself to retire." Here he sighed heavily. "In the City we are born to amass wealth, but I retired. I was already but three years off the Mansion House—but I retired. Well," here he would look about the room, which was, to be sure, small and ill-furnished, "the world seldom enjoys the spectacle of a substantial merchant retiring into obscurity in a country cottage." Here he sighed again.

He retired when I was a little girl of eight or nine, so that I knew nothing of the circumstances connected with his retirement, but I understood well enough that he deeply regretted that step, and longed to be back again on 'Change.

In two words, we now lived in this small house; and my father, instead of directing the affairs of a great London business, took the accounts daily from Sally on her return from the harbour. And a very flourishing and prosperous business it was, while the war lasted; and, though I neither knew nor inquired, it not only kept us in comfort, but enabled my father to keep up the appearance of a substantial merchant; gave him guineas to jingle in his pocket, and preserved for him among the officers and others who used the best room at the tavern of an evening, the dignity and authority which he loved.

At this time I was nineteen years of age. Alas! it is more than twenty years ago. Good King George is dead at last, and I am nearly forty years old. The garden still lies before me, with its fruit-trees, its flowers, and the bees, but what has become of the girl of nineteen? Oh, what becomes of our youth and beauty? Whither do they go when they leave us? Whither go the fresh and rosy cheeks, the dancing eyes, and the smiling lips? What becomes of them when they disappear and leave no trace behind? Those were blue eyes which Raymond loved, and the curls which it pleased him to dangle in his hands and twirl about his fingers, were light brown; and as for the pink and white of the cheeks—nay, it matters not. The girl was comely, and she found favour in the sight of the only man she could ever love. What more, but to thank the Giver of all good things? Love and beauty are among the fruits of the earth, for which we pray that they may be given us in due season.

I was sitting in the porch, pretending to be engaged in cutting out and making a new frock. I remember that the stuff was a gray camblet, which is a useful material, and that the frock was already so far advanced that the lining was cut and basted on the camblet. But I was not thinking at all about the work; for, oh! what should a girl think about the very day after her lover had spoken to her? Spoken, do I say? Nay, kneeled before her and prayed to her, and sworn such vows as made her heart leap up, and her cheek first flush with joy and then turn pale with terror; for it is the property of love to fill us first with gladness unspeakable and then with fear. And, besides, I heard voices in the parlour, the window being open, and I knew very well whose voices they were, viz., those of the Vicar and my father, and that they were talking of Raymond and myself. For the Vicar had always been the patron and protector of the Arnolds, but it could not be denied that they came from France, and my father hated all Frenchmen.

Presently, however, the conference was over and they both came out together, my father carrying himself, it seemed to me, with more than his usual dignity. Heavens! what a Lord Mayor he would have made, had Heaven so willed it! Authority sat upon his brow; wealth and success were stamped upon his face. He spoke slowly, and as one whose words bring a blessing upon those who hear them. A corpulence above the common, joined to a stature also above the common, a commanding nose, thick eyebrows, and a deep voice, all joined in producing the effect of great natural dignity.

While my father walked upright, swelling with consequence, the Vicar beside him might have been the domestic chaplain to some great nobleman in the presence of his master. For, being tall and thin, and with a stooping figure, he seemed to be deferring to the judgment of a superior. Yet, as his eyes met mine, there was in them a look of encouragement which raised my hopes.

"Ha!" he said, standing before the porch, "your garden is always before mine, Molly. There is goodly promise for the year, they tell me. Well, Naboth's vineyard was not more desirable. Perhaps Ahab looked down upon it from the keep of his castle, which, I dare say, greatly resembled yon great tower. It is a goodly garden. It is a garden which in the spring

should fill the heart with hope, and in the autumn with gratitude."

"'Tis well enough," said my father, taking my seat. "'Tis well enough, and serves to amuse the child. It grows a small trifle of fruit too, sufficient—ay, 'tis sufficient—for the modest wants of this poor house."

No doubt one who has known such greatness as my father had enjoyed could talk in such a manner concerning the garden. But—a trifle!

"In former days, Vicar," my father continued, "we had our early peas and hot-house grapes from Covent Garden. But a merchant who retires into the country has to content himself with whatever trifle of garden he may light upon."

"True, sir; 'tis very true. But to our business. Molly, I have this evening been an ambassador to thy father from—nay—thou canst surely guess, child; indeed, in thy cheeks I see that thou hast guessed rightly."

"From Raymond, Molly," my father added kindly. "From the young man, Raymond Arnold."

"I have pointed out to thy father, Molly, that a gentleman of the ancient county of Provence is not a Frenchman, though he may for the time be under French rule. He speaks not the same tongue; he hath not the same ancestry. Wherefore, thy father's first objection against Frenchmen doth not hold in the case of Raymond."

"This I grant," said my father.

"Did not his father die in support of those principles for which we are still contending? And, again," the Vicar continued, "'tis a lad of honourable descent and of illustrious foreign rank, if that were of importance."

"It is not," said my father. "There is no more honourable descent than to be the child of a substantial London merchant. Talk not to me, sir, of French Nobles. Heard one ever of an English Peer teaching a mere accomplishment for a living?"

"Very well, sir; but it is to the point that he is a lad of good morals and sound principle; no drinker or brawler; who enjoys already some success in his calling."

"These things, Vicar, are much more to the point."

"In short, Molly," said the Vicar, turning to me, "thy father consents to this match, but it must be on a condition."

"Oh, sir!" I kissed my father's hand. "You are all goodness. Is it for me to

dispute any condition you may think well to impose?"

"The condition, Molly," said the Vicar, "is that no change may be made in the existing arrangements."

"Why, sir, what change should be made?"

"When daughters marry, my child, they generally go away and leave their fathers; or they even turn their fathers out to make room for the husbands."

Lovers are a selfish folk. I had not considered the difference which my marriage might make to my father.

"Sir," I threw myself at his feet, "this house is yours. If there is room in it for Raymond as well, we shall be grateful to you."

"Good girl," he said, raising me, "good girl; I will continue to manage this little property for thee, to be sure." He looked at the house with condescension. "The cottage is small, yet it is comfortable; in appearance it is hardly worthy of a substantial merchant, yet my habits are simple; the situation is quiet, and the garden fruits are, as I said before, sufficient for my wants. I have retired from the City; I desire no more riches than I have. I would willingly end my days here. Enough said, child; I wish thee—" he kissed me on the forehead—"I wish thee all happiness, my dear."

This said, he rose with dignity, as if no more need be said, and walked out to the garden gate, and so to the tavern where the better sort met daily.

"So," said the Vicar, "here is a pretty day's work—two young fools made happy. Well, I pray that it may turn out well; a fools' paradise is a very pretty place when one is young. He loves thee, that is very sure; why, thou wilt be a Countess—Ho! ho!—Countess Molly, when thou art married, child; Sally will leave off taking the boat down the harbour, I suppose, unless Raymond paints a coronet upon the bows and thy new name, Madame la Comtesse d'Eyragues."

Then the Vicar left me and departed; but he stopped in the road, and listened to the cobbler singing his eternal refrain:—

One pig in ten,
One pig in ten,

Why should the rogue have one pig in ten?

"Jacob," he said, "must thy song ever smack of the pot-house? And when did thy Vicar ask thee for a pig?"

"With submission, your reverence," said Jacob, hammer in air. "What odds for the words so the music fits the work?"

"Idle words, Jacob, are like the thistle-down, which flies unheeded over the fields, and afterwards produces weeds of its kind. Would not the Old Hundredth suit thy turn?"

Jacob shook his head.

"Nay, sir," he said, "my kind of work is not like yours. The making of a sermon, I doubt not, is mightily helped by the Old Hundredth or Alleluia; but cobbling is delicate work, and wants a tune that runs up and down, and may be sung quick or slow, according as the work lays in heel or toe. I tried Alleluia, but Lord! I took two days with Alleluia over a job that with 'Morgan Rattler' or 'Black Jack' I could have knocked off in three hours."

"In that case, Jacob," said the Vicar, "the Church will forgive thee thy fib of one pig in ten."

When they were gone I sat down again, my heart much lighter, though my mind was agitated with thinking of what we should have done had my father withheld his consent. And for some time I heard nothing that went on, though Sally administered the rope's-end to one of the boys, and the cobbler went on singing and the children shouting.

Presently, however, I was disagreeably interrupted by the trampling of a horse's hoofs, the barking of dogs, the cracking of a whip, and a loud, harsh voice, railing at a stable-boy. The voice it was which affected me, because I knew it for the voice of my cousin Tom, who had been drinking and laying bets with some of the officers all the morning, and was now about to ride home. Then the horse came clattering down the street, and he saw me in the porch, I suppose, for he drew rein at the gate and bawled out, his voice being thick with drink:

"Molly, Cousin Molly, I say! Come to the gate—come closer. Well, I have to-day heard a pretty thing of thee—a pretty thing, Molly," he said; "truly, nothing less than that you want to marry a Frenchman, a beggarly Frenchman."

"What business is that of yours?" I asked.

"You may tell him, Mistress Molly, that I shall horsewhip him."

I laughed in his face. A girl always believes that her lover is the bravest of men.

"You, Tom? Why, to be sure, Raymond does not desire to fight his sweetheart's cousin; but if you so much as lift your little finger at him, I promise you,

big as you are, that you will be sorry for it."

At this he used dreadful language, swearing what he would do when he should meet the man I preferred to himself.

"And him a Frenchman, Molly," he concluded. "To think of it! Wouldst throw me over for a beggarly Frenchman? But wait, only wait till I have made him roar for mercy and beg my pardon on his knees. Then, perhaps——"

"Oh!" I cried, "go away quickly, lest he should come and take you at your word."

He began to swear again, but suddenly stopped and went away, cantering along the road, followed by his dogs; and, though I knew my Raymond to be brave and strong, I was glad that he did not meet this half-drunken cousin of mine in his angry mood.

Tom Wilgress, my mother's nephew, and therefore my own first cousin, who afterwards broke his neck over a hedge fox-hunting, was then a young man about five-and-twenty. He was of a sturdy and well-built figure, but his cheeks were already red and puffed up with strong drink. He had a small estate, which he bequeathed to me, part of which he farmed, and part let out to tenants. It was situated north of Portedown Hill, under the Forest of Bere. But the greater part of his time he spent at the Castle or the village tavern drinking, smoking tobacco, making bets, running races, badger-drawing, cock-fighting, and all kinds of sport with the officers of the garrison. He professed to be in love with me, and continually entreated me to marry him, a thing which I could not contemplate without horror. Sometimes he would fall on his knees and supplicate me with tears, swearing that he loved me better than his life (he did not say better than a bowl of punch), and sometimes he would threaten me with dreadful pains and punishments if I continued in my contumacy.

This evening I clearly foresaw, from the redness of his face, the thickness of his voice, and a certain glassy look in his eye, that he was about to adopt the latter method. Heaven pity the wife of such a man as my cousin Tom! But he is now dead, and hath left me his estate, wherefore I will speak of him no more evil than I can help, yet must speak the truth.

When he was gone, I returned to my work.

Presently, I was again interrupted, this time by Madam Claire. She had with her one of the French prisoners. It was a young man whom we all knew very well. He was a sous-lieutenant, which means some kind of ensign in a French infantry regiment, about Raymond's age—that is, between twenty-three and twenty-four—and had been a prisoner for three years. We knew a great many of the French officers; this was natural, because we were the only people in the village who could talk their language. I say we, because the Arnolds taught me, and in their cottage we spoke both French and Provençal. But this young man was our special friend; he was the friend of Raymond, whom he called his brother, and of Madam Claire, whom he called his mother. Of course, therefore, he was my friend as well. The reasons for the affection we bore him were many. First, he came from the South of France, and was therefore a countryman of Raymond's, and had spoken, like Raymond, the language of the South when a child. Next, when he was first landed he fell ill with some kind of malignant fever, which I believe would have carried him off but for Madam Claire, who nursed him, sitting with him day and night, a service for which he was ever grateful. Thirdly, he was a young man of the happiest disposition, the kindest heart, and the sweetest manners possible.

As he came from the same part of the country, it was not strange that he should be like Raymond, those of Southern France being all dark of complexion, and with black hair and eyes. But it was remarkable that he should be so very much like him that they might be taken for twins. They were of the same height, which was something under the average height of an Englishman; their heads were of the same shape, their eyes and hair of the same shade, their chins rounded in the same way; even their voices were the same.

The resemblance was the greater this evening because, his own uniform having fallen into rags, Pierre wore the dress of a civilian, a brown coat and a round hat. His hair was neatly tied and powdered, his linen was clean; he might have passed very well for what they call the country Jessamy.

Of course, those who knew them well, knew the differences between the two, just as a shepherd knows each sheep, though they seem to the general world all exactly alike. So many were

their points of difference, that it was impossible to mistake one for the other. Pierre was of a larger and stouter frame, in manner he was more vivacious, his step was livelier, his gesture more marked, he talked more. It was strange to note that Pierre, as well as Raymond, had what is called the air of distinction. No one could fail to remark that he looked, as we in England should say, every inch a gentleman, and carried himself accordingly, yet with something of the French gallantry and swagger which was not unbecoming. Yet he was by birth a son of the people; he came, like General Hoche, the soldier whom most he admired, from the gutter, and he was proud of it. Raymond, for his part, was of a more quiet habit—you would have taken him for a scholar—who talked little; a dreamer, contented to accept whatever fortune offered. Had he been a soldier, he might have had the same ambitions as his friend, but he would have talked about them less.

"Their faces," said Madam Claire, "are those of my countrymen. Some call it the Roman face; you may see it on the old monuments in the cemetery of Arles. Bonaparte is reported to have this face, though he is but a Corsican."

I have never seen any nuns, but when I hear or read of them I must needs think of Madam Claire, who had been what is called a religieuse, but I know not of what kind. In religion she was named Sister Angélique, but her Chrisom name was Claire. She wore a frock of blue stuff with a long cloak of the same; on her head was a cap or hood of the same, with a white starched cap beneath; she had also a large white collar, round her neck was a gold chain with a crucifix, and in her hand she always carried a book, because her rules obliged her to read prayers at certain hours all through the day. She spent her time chiefly in the Castle infirmary, where she nursed and comforted the sick prisoners. Her face was pale, but sweet to look upon, and to me it seemed always as if she never thought of herself at all, but always of the person with whom she was speaking.

We are taught that to hide in a convent is but to exchange one set of temptations for another, but it would surely be a blessed thing if our Church allowed men and women to renounce the things in which we weaker creatures place our happiness (such as love, marriage, and tender children, or place, power, and

wealth), and to give all their labour and thought for the good of others. This is what Madam Claire did.

"Great news!" cried Pierre. "Great news indeed! Peace is concluded and signed. We are all going to be returned."

This was news indeed. For four or five months nothing else had been spoken of; but though there was a cessation of hostilities, there was always the fear that the negotiations would be broken off.

"Peace!" I replied. "And what have they done for the émigrés?"

"I believe they have done nothing. Vive la paix!—until we are ready to go home again. Then, tap-tap goes the drum, and to the field again, and I come home a Colonel at least."

"I understand not," said Madam, "how peace can be concluded unless the King returns with the nobles, and the old order is established again."

"The old order!" Pierre laughed. "Oh, ma mère, the old order is the old world before the Deluge. But you do not understand. Whatever else returns, the old order will never return. Why, will a people, once free, return to slavery?"

"But for what else has Great Britain fought, except for the old order?"

"I know not, indeed. But this I know, that the old order is dead and buried."

Certainly there was never any man who more honestly believed in the Revolution than Pierre. Yet not like the wretches who were our first prisoners in that war, who shouted the Carmagnole and tossed their caps in the air, filled with hatred for priests and aristos. They were gone, and they would never come back again.

"How, then," said Madam, "are we to go back again, unless they return us our property?"

"Your property is sold and your rights are lost," Pierre replied. "Come back and join the people. You are no longer a separate caste, we are all French together. Well, if you please, we will carve a slice out of Germany and give it to you. And your share, ma mère, I will conquer for you with my own sword."

In the evening, when they were gone, I had another visitor—Raymond himself—and we talked together as lovers do, of nothing but ourselves. The peace was signed. It was not possible that Great Britain had abandoned the émigrés; some compensation would be made. For his part, he loved not the new order in France, and decided not to live there; he would be an English-

man; but with this compensation, he would do this and that, always with me. Oh, the dear, delightful talk!

I went with him at nine o'clock to the garden gate. Sally was standing there waiting for us, her arms akimbo—well, with her short petticoats and big boots she looked exactly like a sailor.

"So, young gentleman," she said, "I hear that my mistress has promised to marry you."

"Indeed she has, Sally."

"A lucky and a happy man her husband will be."

"He will, Sally."

"We have known you a long time, Mr. Raymond."

"More than eight years, Sally."

"And yet it can't be denied that you are a Frenchman, much the same as those poor fellows now in the Castle."

"I am an Englishman now, Sally, because I shall have an English wife, which of course naturalises a man."

"I hope," said Sally, "that it's more than skin deep, and that we shan't have no fallings off."

CHAPTER II. PORCHESTER CASTLE.

THE Castle, which, now that the long wars are over, one hopes for many years, is silent and deserted, its ruined courts empty, its crumbling walls left to decay, presented a different appearance indeed in the spring of the year 1802. For in those days it was garrisoned by two regiments of militia, and was occupied by the prodigious number of eight thousand prisoners.

I am told that there are other ancient castles in the country even more extensive and more stately than Porchester; but I have never seen them, and am quite satisfied to believe that for grandeur, extent, and the awe of antiquity, there can be none which can surpass, and few which can pretend to equal, this monument. It is certainly ruinous in parts, yet still so strong as to serve for a great prison, but it is not overthrown, and its crumbling walls, broken roofs, and dismantled chambers surround the place with a solemnity which affects the most careless visitor.

It is so ancient that there are some who pretend that parts of it may belong to British times, while it is certain that the whole of the outer wall was built by the Romans. In imitation of their camps, it stands foursquare, and has hollow round towers in the sides and at the corners.

The spot was chosen, not at the mouth of the harbour, the Britons having no means of attacking ships entering or going out; but at the very head of the harbour, where the creek runs up between the shallows, which are banks of mud at low water. Hither came the Roman galleys, laden with military stores, to land them under the protection of the Castle. When the Romans went away, and the Saxons came, who loved not fighting behind walls, they neglected the fortress, but built a church within the walls, and there laid their dead. When in their turn the Normans came, they built a castle after their own fashion, within the Roman walls. This is the stronghold, containing four square towers and a fortified entrance. And the Normans built the water-gate and the gate tower. The rest of the great space became the outer bailey of the Castle. They also added battlements to the wall, and dug a moat, which they filled with sea-water at high tide.

The battlements of the Normans are now broken down or crumbling away; great patches of the rubble work have fallen here and there. Yet one can walk round the narrow ledge designed for the bowmen. The wall is crowned with waving grass and wallflowers, and up the sides grow elder-bushes, blackberry, ivy, and bramble, as luxuriantly as in any hedge beyond Portadown. If you step out through the water-gate, which is now roofless, with little left to show its former splendour, except a single massive column, you will find, at high tide, the water lapping the lowest stones of the towers, just as it did when the Romans built them. Instead of the old galleys, which must have been light in draught, to come up Porchester Creek, there are now lying half-a-dozen boats, the whole fleet of the little village. On the other side of the water are the wooded islets of Great and Little Horsea, and I suppose they look to-day much as they did a thousand years ago. On this side you look towards the east; but, if you get to the south side of the Castle, and walk across a narrow meadow which lies between the wall and the sea, you have a very different view. For you look straight across the harbour to its very mouth, three miles away; you gaze upon a forest of masts and upon ships of every kind, from the stately man-o'-war to the saucy pink, and, twenty years ago, of every nation—because, in those days, we seemed at war with half the world—from the French-built frigate,

the most beautiful ship that floats, to the Mediterranean xebecque, all of them prizes. Here they lie, some ready for sea, some just arrived, some battered by shot, some newly repaired and fresh from the yard; some—it seems a cruel fate for ships which have fought the battles of their country—converted into hulks for convicts and for prisoners; some store-ships—why, there is no end to the number and the kind of the ships lying in the harbour. They could tell, if they could speak, of many a battle and many a storm; some of them are as old as the days of Admiral Benbow; one poor old hulk is so old that she was once a man-o'-war in the old Dutch wars of Charles the Second, and carried on board, it is said, the Duke of York himself.

In the dockyard, within the harbour, the wooden walls of England are built; here they are fitted up; from this place they go forth to fight the French. Heavens! how many ships we sent forth every year! How many were built in the yard! How many brave fellows were sacrificed year after year before the insatiable rage for war which possessed one man, and through him, all Europe, could be overcome, and the tyrant confined in his cage, like a wild beast, until he should die!

Standing under those walls, I say, we could look straight down the harbour to the forts which guard its entrance; we could see in the upper part the boats plying backwards and forwards; we could hear the booming of the salutes; we could even see the working of the semaphore, by whose mysterious arms news is conveyed to London in half-an-hour. And the sight of the ships, the movement of the harbour, the distant banging of the guns, made one, even one who lived in so quiet a village as Porchester, feel as if one was taking part in the great events which shook the world. It was a hard time to many, and an anxious time for all; a time full of lavish expenditure for the country; a time when bread was dear and work scarce, with trade bad and prospects uncertain. Alas! with what beating of heart did we wait for news, and gather together to listen when a newspaper was brought to the village! For still it seemed as if, defeat his navies though we might, and though we chased his cruisers off the seas, and tore down the French flag from his colonies, the Corsican Usurper was marching from one triumph to another, until the whole of Europe, save Russia and England, was subjugated and laid prostrate at his feet.

As for bad times, we at Porchester—so near to Portsmouth, where all the shopkeepers were making their fortunes, and the ships caused so great a daily expenditure of money—felt them but little, save for the cost of coals, which were, I remember, as much as fifty shillings a ton; and the lack of French brandy, which we women never wanted to drink, and of Gascony or claret wine, which we replaced, quite to our own satisfaction, with the delicate cowslip or the wholesome ginger, made in our own homes. Think, however, if there were so many men afloat—a hundred and twenty thousand sailors in His Majesty's Navy alone, to say nothing of those aboard the merchant ships, coasters, colliers, and privateers—there were also so many women ashore, and so many hearts torn with anxiety at the news of every engagement. Custom hardens the heart, and no doubt many, even of those who loved their husbands tenderly, rose up in the morning and went to bed at night with no more than a simple prayer for his safety. You shall hear, however, one woman's history, by which you may learn to feel for others. What am I, and what have I done, that, while so many poor creatures were stricken with lifelong grief, my shadow should have given place to sunshine, my sorrow to joy?

The outer ward of the Castle was open every Sunday, because the church stands in the south-east corner. It is the old Saxon church altered by the Normans. Formerly it was shaped like a cross; but one of the arms has long since fallen down. The nave is long and narrow, and rather dark, which pleased Madam Claire, because it reminded her of the churches of Provence, which, it seems, are all kept dark on account of the hot sunshine outside. On one side of the nave is hung up a great wooden picture of the Royal Arms, with the lion and the unicorn, to remind us of our loyalty; at the end is a gallery where the choir sit on Sundays, and below the gallery an old stone font, ornamented, like the chancel, with round arches curiously interlaced, very pretty, though much worn with age. In the churchyard outside, there is an old yew among the graves. As for tombstones, they are few, because, when a villager dies, the mound which marks his grave is known as long as his memory lasts, which is as long as his children, or at most his grandchildren, survive him. What need of a tombstone when the man, obscure in his life, is clean forgotten? And

how many, even of the great, are remembered longer than these villagers?

To this church we came every Sunday; my father and I sitting in the pew on the right hand of the chancel, and after the prisoners' return, Madam Claire and Raymond with us. The left-hand pew was occupied by Mr. Phipps, retired purser, and his wife, a haughty lady, daughter of a Portsmouth purveyor to the fleet. In the long nave, never half filled, sat the villagers; the choir were in the gallery at the end, where we had music of violin, violoncello, and flute; in the transept were the soldiers of the garrison, near the church door, so that in case of trouble they might troop out quickly.

There were no gentlefolk in the village, unless we count ourselves. I am well aware that people who sell fruit and vegetables from a market-boat, even though the head of the family be an Alderman, cannot be regarded as belonging to the Quality. But if a woman is by marriage raised to her husband's rank, it is beyond question that my own position, had every one her rights, should be among the noblest in the county, even though the boat still goes down the harbour (the profits being very far short of what they were in the war time), and though some persons, jealous of my connection with the old French nobility, sniff, as I am informed, at the pretensions of a market-gardener. Sniffing cannot extinguish birth; and perhaps now that we are in easier circumstances, and have succeeded to my cousin Tom's estate, my son may one day resume the ancient title.

Outside the gates, the village tavern, now so quiet the week through except on Saturday evenings, was crowded all day long, with soldiers drinking, smoking tobacco, and talking about the war. There was a canteen in the Castle, but the men preferred the tavern, because, I suppose, it was more homelike. In the evening there was a nightly gathering, or club, held in the upper room, where the officers, with a few gentlemen from the village, assembled to take their punch.

The regiments in garrison in the year 1801, were the Royal Dorset Militia and the Denbigh Militia, under the command of Colonel the Hon. George Pitt, afterwards second Lord Rivers, at this time a man of fifty years.

There were in the Castle at that date no fewer than eight thousand prisoners. It seems an incredible number to be confined

in one place; but in this country altogether thirty-five thousand French prisoners were confined, of whom four thousand were at Forton, near Gosport; nine thousand in the hulks in the harbour, and I know not how many at Waltham, in Essex; at Norman Cross; at Plymouth, and up the Medway. These men were not, it is true, all French sailors; but they comprised the very pick and flower of the French Navy. Why, the pretended peace of 1802, for what purpose was it concluded but to get back those sailors whom we fought again at Trafalgar? As for exchange, 'tis true that France had some ten thousand English prisoners, with a few thousand Hanoverians; but the advantage was all on their side.

A great fortress, with eight thousand prisoners and a garrison of two thousand men within a stone's throw of the village, yet their presence disturbed us little. In the day-time those prisoners who were on parole walked out of the Castle, it is true, but they made no disturbance; the common sort, of course, were not suffered out on parole at all, so that we never saw them unless we went into the Castle. Their provisions were sent up the harbour from Portsmouth; it was by the same way that most of the visitors came to see them. Within the Castle, among the prisoners, were farriers, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers, and tradesmen of every kind, so that they had no occasion to go outside for anything except for poultry, eggs, and fresh butter, which the farmers' wives brought to the Castle from the country round. As for the fare of the prisoners, it must be owned that it was of the simplest. Yet, how many a poor man in this country would be thankful could he look forward confidently to receive every day a pound and a half of bread and half-a-pound of beef, with vegetables! No beer or rum was served out, but those who had money might buy it in the canteen, and that of the best and at a cheap rate.

All that we heard of the prisoners was the beating of the drums and the blowing of the whistles in the morning and evening. At night there were a hundred sentries posted round the Castle, almost close to each other, and every half-hour the sergeant of the main guard went his round and challenged the sentries. Then those in the village who were awake heard the hoarse answer of the men—"All's well"—and the sergeant marched on, and you heard the same words a little farther

off, and so on, quite round the Castle, getting fainter as the sergeant reached the water-gate, and becoming gradually louder as he returned to the main guard station outside the Castle gate. Also, at nine o'clock, the curfew bell was rung, when all lights had to be put out, and the men turned in. Once there was a great scare, for the man whose duty it was to ring the bell, an old man named Clapham, fell asleep just before nine and woke up at midnight; thinking he had been sleeping only for a minute or two, he seized the rope and rang lustily. Then the garrison was hastily turned out, and the whole country-side, roused by the alarm of the midnight bell, and all the men in the village, and from Cosham, Wymering, Widley, Southwick, Fareham, and even Titchbrook, all with one consent came pouring into Porchester armed with whatever they could snatch, thinking it was a rising of the prisoners. At the head of the Porchester squad marched none other than our Sally, armed with a pitchfork and full of valour.

They were at night confined to their quarters, some in wooden buildings erected in the outer court, some in the four towers of the inner Castle. Of these the largest, the keep, was divided into fourteen rooms, without counting the dungeons. Gloomy rooms they were, being lighted only by narrow loop-holes.

The other towers were smaller; in one—it was whispered with shuddering—there was a dissecting-room, used by the French surgeons who were prisoners, and by the English regimental surgeon. As for the men's quarters, it may be understood that these were not luxurious. Some of them had hammocks, but when the press grew thicker, straw was thrown upon the floor for those to sleep upon for whom hammock room could not be found. Hard as was the lot of the Porchester prisoners, however, it was comfort compared with that of the men immured at Forton, where there was hardly room to stand in the exercise ground, and they lay at night as thick as herrings in a barrel; or with those who were confined on the hulks, which were used as punishment ships, where the refractory and desperate were sent, and where half-rations brought them to reason and obedience. At Porchester the prisoners got at least plenty of fresh air, sunshine, and room to walk about. For the refractory, besides the hulks and half-rations, there was a black hole, and if a man tried to escape, the sen-

tries had orders, after calling upon him to stand, to fire if he did not obey.

The prisoners, I have said, were mostly French sailors; but there were a good many soldiers among them, those taken, namely, in the conquest of the French colonies. There were also hundreds of privateers' men, as good sailors as any in the Republican Navy. Among them were many Vendéans who had been concerned in the rising; they thought to escape the penalty which overtook so many of their comrades by going on board a privateer, but, being taken prisoners, jumped, as one may say, out of the fire into the frying-pan. Among them also, at one time, were a thousand negroes, once slaves, but turned into soldiers by the French, and taken at the island of St. Vincent. The cold weather, however, killed most of these poor fellows very quickly. Another company of soldiers were the fellows intended for the invasion of Ireland, and taken off the Irish coast; a sturdy band of veterans they were. After the battle of Camperdown no fewer than one thousand eight hundred Dutch sailors were brought to the Castle; but these gallant Hollanders, who had been dragged into the war without any wish on their part to fight for France, mostly volunteered into our service, and became good British sailors.

The earliest prisoners were zealous Republicans, especially those taken prisoners by Lord Howe after the "First of June," in 1794. These men used to shew their sentiments by dancing and singing "Ca Ira" and "La Carmagnole" every night, and flinging their red caps in the air.

Le Duc de York avait permis
Que Dunkerque lui serait remis;
Mais il a mal conté,
Grace à vos canoniers.
Dansons la Carmagnole;
Vive le son,
Vive le son—
Dansons la Carmagnole—
Vive le son
Du canon.

Such is the ignorance of the British soldier that the men understood not one word, and as they only laughed and were amused at these demonstrations, the zeal of these Republicans abated.

After the defeat of the Spanish fleet by Admiral Jervis off Cape St. Vincent, a great number of Spaniards were brought in, and these proved a very desperate lot indeed. It was a company of these fellows who laid a plot to escape, thinking to take

one of the small vessels in the harbour and to get out to sea. They got some horse-shoe files, ground them to a fine edge and a point, and fitted them to handles, so as to make excellent daggers. Armed with these they got into the dungeons under the Queen's Tower, and began to dig their way out. They were secured after a desperate fight, and sent on board the hulks.

Among the officers the most remarkable was a certain General Tate, formerly of the Irish Brigade, who was sent with a legion composed entirely of galley-slaves to invade the coast of Wales—a wild and desperate attempt, resolved upon, one would think, with the view of getting rid of the galley-slaves and effecting a diversion of troops to a distant part of the country. The ships were wrecked at a place called Fishguard, and the men mutinied and spread about the country to rob and plunder, until they were caught or shot down. Their commander was a fine old man, tall and erect, with long white hair, an hereditary enemy to Great Britain, but good company and a man of excellent manners.

There were other notable prisoners. The wretch Tallien, who murdered seven hundred Royalists at Quiberon, was here for a short time. The General Baraguay d'Hilliers was also here. Once there arrived a whole shipload of young ladies, taken on board a ship bound for the Isle of France, whither they were going in search of husbands. They were not detained long, and the ladies and gentry round about made their stay pleasant for them with dances and parties. One of them remained behind to marry an Englishman. There was also a certain black General, whose name I forget, but he had with him four wives; and there was a young fellow who, after six months in prison, fell ill, and was discovered to be a woman. Strange things happened among them. Thus one day, a certain French Captain, who had been morose for a long time, mounted to the roof of the keep and threw himself off, being weary of his life. When they quarrelled, which was often, they fought duels with swords, for want of proper weapons, made out of bits of iron, filed and sharpened and tied to the ends of sticks. And there was one man who was continually escaping. He would climb down the wall at night unseen by the sentries; then he would seek shelter in the Forest of Bere, and live by depredation among the poultry-yards and farmhouses till he was

caught and sent back. Once he made his way to London, and called at the house of M. Otto, who was the French Commissioner for the prisoners.

The daily life of the prisoners was wearisome and monotonous. Some of them had money sent by their friends, with which they would buy drink, tobacco, and clothes; most had none. They lounged away the hours talking idly; they gambled all day long, for what stakes I know not, but they were as eager on the games as if there were thousands of pounds depending on the result. They played dominoes, backgammon, and draughts; they smoked as much tobacco as they could procure; few of them—I speak of the common sort—knew how to read or write; their language was full of blasphemy and oaths. The soldiers for the most part had abandoned all religion, but the sailors retained their former faith. The happiest among them were those who had a trade and could work at it. The carpenter, tailor, shoemaker, cooks, and barbers, were always at work, and made considerable earnings. Besides the regular trades, there were arts by which large sums were made. The place in the summer was crowded with visitors, who came from all the country round—from Portsmouth, the Isle of Wight, Southampton, Lymington, Faversham; even from Winchester and Chichester—to gaze upon the prisoners. These people, after staring at the strange, wild creatures, unkempt and ragged, were easily persuaded to buy the pretty things which the more ingenious of them carved, such as toys, tobacco-stoppers, and nicknacks out of wood, the simpler things of soft deal, but the more expensive out of some chance piece of oak or a pine-knot; out of beef-bones they made models of ships, chessmen, draughts, dominoes, and card counters; out of dried straws they braided little boxes, dinner-mats, and all kinds of pretty, useless things; and some of them made thread-lace so beautifully that it was sold at a great price and carried all about the country, and all the lace-makers began to cry out, when the Government stopped that industry.

Two priests were allowed to go in and out among them, and to celebrate the papistical mass, which was done every morning in a ruined gallery called the Chapel. It was boarded, glass was put into the window, a door was provided, and an altar. Madam Claire came daily, and many of the Vendean and Breton sailors.

The rest stayed away, even on Sundays, and many, if the priest spoke to them of religion, answered with blasphemy and execration. Why should a horrid atheism be joined to Republican principles? Yet the United States of America and the Swiss States are not atheistical.

CHAPTER III. THE FAMILY LUCK.

THE Arnolds—whose real name was Arnault, but it has thus been Englished—came to Porchester early in the year 1794. Why they directed their steps to this village, I know not. They were saved, with many more, when the city of Toulon was taken by the French. Raymond, who was then fourteen years of age, has often described to me the terrible night when the French poured shot and shell upon the town, while the English fired the arsenal and destroyed those ships which they could not carry out. With his mother he was taken on board an English ship, being separated by the crowd from his father, who was unhappily left behind. On board the same ship was found his aunt, Madam Claire, called in religion Sister Angélique. How she got there she knew not, nor could she ever remember, her wits being scattered for the time with the terrors of the night, the awful flames, the roar of the cannon, and the bursting of the shells. When, however, she recovered her senses, it was found that she was still grasping the bag which contained the most precious of all the family treasures, namely, the Golden Rose, presented by a certain Pope, who lived I know not how long ago—it was when the Popes were at Avignon, instead of Rome—to one of the ladies of their house, then, and until the Revolution, one of the most illustrious houses in the South of France. With the Rose the Pope gave his blessing, with the promise, it was said—though how a mere man, even the Pope of Rome, can presume to make such a promise one knows not—that so long as the Rose remained with the family, the line should never cease. Certainly the line hath never ceased for five hundred years and more, though after the death of Raymond's father, he himself, a boy of thirteen, was the sole representative. As for the Rose itself, which is now in my possession and kept locked up, it is a strange thing to look at, being the imitation of a rose-bush about eighteen inches high in pure red gold. No one would guess, without being told, that it was

intended for a rose-bush, for the trunk and branches are all straight and stiff, as much like a real rose-bush as a tree in a sampler is like a real tree. It is provided with leaves, also of gold, and with flowers and buds, which were set with all kinds of precious stones, small in size but beautiful in colour, such as rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and many others whose names I know not. I suppose there is no other example in the whole of His Majesty's realms of such a Rose. I have heard that the King of Spain or the Emperor of Austria may possibly have one, but probably there is no other Holy Rose in the possession of a private family.

When they were landed at Portsmouth, these fugitives had nothing; neither money, nor clothes, nor friends. One of them was a lady who knew nothing of the world, having been for the most of her life in a convent; another was a lady whose anxiety for her husband was quickly driving her mad; and the third was only a boy. A more pitiful party was never landed from France, not even counting that boat-load of unfortunate émigrés which was found in Southampton Water one morning, starving and penniless, and almost naked. There was nothing by which these ladies could earn their bread, because they could do nothing. Yet they were richer than any of the rest, because they had with them the Golden Rose.

I know not exactly when they learned the truth about the head of their house thus left to the mercies of the Revolutionists, but it was after they landed at Portsmouth and before they went to Porchester. The news was brought to them by an eye-witness. The Republican Army, masters of the city, made the whole of the remaining inhabitants prisoners. And they shot all those, including the Comte d'Eyragues, who were of rank and position. Against him, it was said, a certain man, who had been a dependent or humble friend, gave information, so that his fate was at once decided, and he was shot. And when this news arrived, his widow went out of her mind, and, unlike Madam Claire, who had only been scared, she never recovered.

"Ladies," said the Vicar of Porchester, when he was first called to consider their case, "there is no alternative. You must sell this precious relic."

He addressed both ladies, but only one heard and understood him.

"Alas!" cried that one, "if it were

not for Raymond I would rather starve than part with it. And to let it go is to imperil the poor boy's life, since there is none other to continue the family."

"You may send it to London," said the Vicar, "to be sold to some great nobleman as a wonderful curiosity. Or you may sell it to a merchant for the value of its gold and precious stones. Or, if you prefer, you might sell it little by little. Thus you might keep the Rose itself for a long time by selling the jewels of the flowers. See, some of the stones are large and valuable. Take one out, and let me sell it for your immediate wants. When the money is exhausted you can give me another, and so on. Perhaps, long before you come to an end, your fortunes will change; the Republic will be overthrown, and the émigrés returned."

"Alas!" she cried again. "The jewels are a part of the Holy Rose, and they have been blessed by the Pope himself. Is it not the sin of sacrilege?"

"On the contrary, Madam," the Vicar replied, smiling. "I suppose that the blessing of the Pope has never before proved of so practical a value."

I remember very well the day of their arrival, for the news had spread abroad that some French people were going to live in Mr. Phipps's cottage, and I went out to see them come. They were brought up in a boat from Portsmouth, and landed close to the water-gate of the Castle. (There were no prisoners in the Castle as yet.) The Vicar was with them, and led them through the Castle to the village. You may be sure we all stared, never thinking that we should behold on English ground so strange a creature as a nun. Yet here was one, dressed in a blue cloak and blue frock, with a white starched hood or cap. She carried a bag in her hand, and round her neck was a gold chain with a crucifix. On one side of her walked our Vicar, who, I suppose, had persuaded them to seek this asylum; and on the other a lady richly dressed, though there were the stains of the voyage and rough weather upon her fine clothes. The nun was pale, and walked with her eyes downcast; this lady tossed her head and laughed, talking without cessation. She laughed because she was out of her mind, having been driven mad, we learned, by terror and the loss of her husband; and she talked because she believed that her husband was still living, and that he was always with her day and night. This belief she maintained till her

death, and certainly nothing happier could have befallen the poor lady. Very soon those who went to the house, began to believe that the spirit of her husband was permitted to remain on earth for his wife's protection; and though one may not be believed, I dare assert that the haunted house had no terrors for me, though a ghost in my own room would have driven me mad with fear. Behind the ladies walked a handsome boy, black-eyed and with black hair. Little did I think how that boy was to become the whole joy of my life.

There was never, I am certain, a household more frugal than this. The two ladies seemed to live altogether upon bread and salad, or upon bread dipped in oil; while Madam Claire rigorously kept all the fasts of her Church (though none of the feasts), abstaining, on those days, from all food except that which is absolutely necessary. They kept fowls, the eggs of which were reserved for Raymond. They lived in a little cottage at three pounds a year. As for their clothes, Madam Claire mended them, washed and ironed them; though sometimes Raymond was in need of boots and coats, when money must be found. Yet, with all this frugality, the stones of the Holy Rose slowly diminished; its flowers began to assume a shabby and (so to speak) an autumnal aspect; for the years went on, and the Republic was not overthrown, nor were the émigrés invited to return to their property.

When we became friends, which was very soon, the boy taught me his language, and I taught him mine. Which was the apter scholar I know not. He was three years older than I, but was never ashamed to play with a girl. When he had no work to do—either lessons for the Vicar, or work in the garden where they grew their salads—he would go with me, either to row down the creek among the men-o'-war in the harbour, or to ramble in the woods beyond Portsdown Hill. And thus we continued companions and friends, after we were grown out of boy and girl and before we became lovers—though I believe we were lovers from the beginning.

Raymond was not a bookish boy, nor did he take to the learning with which the Vicar would have willingly supplied him in ample quantities had he desired. But though he grew up a gentle young man, as a boy he excelled in all kinds of manly games, and was ready to wrestle, run, or leap with any of his own age, or to fight with any

who called him French Frog, or Johnny Crapaud. Consequently he received the respect which is always paid to the possessor of courage. It is strange to note how boys will sometimes become enemies and rivals from the very first. This was the case with my cousin Tom and Raymond. Tom was the stronger, but Raymond the more active. Tom spoke behind Raymond's back of French impudence, French presumption, and French brag; but I never heard that he allowed himself those liberties before Raymond's face. And I well remember one 26th of July, which is Portadown Fair, how, in the sports upon the Running Walks at the back of Richardson's Theatre, Raymond laid Tom fair and flat upon his back at wrestling, so that he limped away shaken all over and growling about foul play, though it was as fair a throw as was ever seen.

Later on it pleased Tom to describe himself as my wooer, which was ridiculous, because I never could have given a thought to Tom, even if Raymond had not been there before him. Who could endure the caresses of a man who was always longing to be where cocks are fought, badgers drawn, prize-fights fought, races run, and drink flowing; whose clothes smelt of the stable, and whose language was that of grooms, hostlers, and jockeys? It pleased him, too, in spite of the lesson taught him at Portadown Fair, to affect a contempt for Raymond. He laughed scornfully when he spoke of him. "One Englishman," he said, "is worth three Frenchmen. Everybody knows that. Wait, Molly, till I give him a basting." Yet the day of that basting did not arrive. And I suppose that this threatening promise was made to none but myself, otherwise Raymond would have been told; in which case it is certain the thing would have been brought to a head.

Very likely it made Tom happier to believe that he could administer that basting if he should choose. As you will see presently, the moment actually chosen by him for the purpose was unfortunate.

It was difficult for the émigrés and for their sons to find employment by which to make their livelihood. For though in this country every calling is open to all, so that many, even of our Bishops and Judges, have been poor boys to begin, yet a young man's choice is generally restricted by the circumstances of his birth and condition. Thus the son of the village carpenter succeeds his father, and the man who hath a good shop bequeaths it to his son. But

if a young man aspires to a profession, he must be able to spend a great deal of money in order to learn its secrets, and to be received by some learned society as a member. Nothing can be done without money or interest. If he would be a farmer, he must be able to lay out money upon stock and implements; if a tradesman, he must be first apprenticed and afterwards buy and stock his shop; if he be a clergyman, he must be able to buy a living, unless he find a patron; if he becomes a soldier, he must buy his commission; if a sailor, he must bribe some one in place, or remain for ever a midshipman; if he would find a Government office, even of the humblest kind, he must have interest to procure it for him, or money to buy it.

Some of them, therefore, became teachers, because teaching is the only kind of work which requires no money, apprenticeship, interest, or bribery. They taught their own language for the most part, or the accomplishments which they were best qualified to undertake, namely, dancing, music, deportment, drawing, and so forth. The more ingenious painted pictures, or carved statues; some composed music; some carved in wood and ivory; some became conjurors, ventriloquists, tumblers, or circus riders; a good many became cooks or barbers; some, I have heard, became gamblers by profession, and if they belonged to the better sort, played cards at clubs, if to the baser, held their tables at fairs and races. Some turned thieves and rogues, but these were few. A great many went home again as soon as it was safe, though they did not get back their lands. Some went to America, but I know not what they did there. Whatever they did, it was always considered as a make-shift against the day when they should return and be restored to their own property.

As for Raymond, it was necessary that he should work for his bread as soon as possible. Fortunately, though he loved not books, he was continually drawing and painting. It is an art by which some men live, either by teaching or selling their pictures. "Let the boy," said the Vicar, "cultivate this gift, so that, perhaps, if the need still exists, it may provide him the means of an honourable livelihood until the day when you shall happily, under Providence, return to your own."

In short, Raymond was put under a master at Gosport until the age of nineteen, when he had learned all that could be taught him. Then, because pupils were

not to be found in Porchester, he went to Portsmouth, and began to teach to such of the young officers as wished to learn, the arts of drawing and painting, and making plans and maps, especially plans of fortifications.

But the time went on, and the successes of the Republican armies did not hold out much hope that the return of the Nobles would soon take place.

CHAPTER IV. IN THE OTHER CAMP.

"HUZZA, Molly!" cried my cousin, his face full of exultation. "'Tis now certain that we shall have peace. I have been drinking the health of Boney, whom I shall ever love for calling home all starving Frenchmen."

"Will the émigrés go home, too, Tom?"

"Ay, they will all go. What? Do you think we shall suffer them to stay any longer, the ragged, greedy blood-suckers, when there are honest Britons out of work? Not so. They must pack."

"Will their property be restored to them, then?"

"Nay, I know not! 'Tis thought at the tavern that something will be done for them, but I know not what. Well, Molly, so you will lose your fine lover."

"Never mind my fine lover, Tom."

"Nay, I mind him not a button!" Here he put one hand in his pocket, and with the other shook his cudgel playfully. "Molly, he is a lucky lad. Another week and he would have had a basting. Ay, in another week at farthest I must have drubbed him."

"Oh, Tom! how long has that drubbing been threatened? Nay, it were a pity, if Raymond must go, for him never to know your truly benevolent intentions. I will tell him this evening."

"As you please, my girl; as you please," he replied carelessly, and sauntered away, but returned back after a few steps. "Molly," he said, "I think it would be kindest to let the poor man go in ignorance of what would have befallen him. What? He cannot help being a Frenchman. Don't let him feel his misfortune more than is necessary."

This was thoughtful of Tom.

"Then, Tom, I will not tell him. But it is for your sake and to spare you, not him, the drubbing. Oh, Tom, he would break every bone in your body; but if you mean what you say, and are really not

afraid of him, why not tell him what you have told me?"

"Well, Molly, you can say what you like; but you are not married yet, my girl. You are not married yet."

I did not tell Raymond, because I think it is wicked for a woman to set men a-fighting, though it is commonly done by village girls; but I had no anxiety on the score of Tom's desire to baste anybody. I might have felt some anxiety had I reflected that the ways of a man when in liquor cannot always be foretold.

Raymond thought little of Tom at this time. The conditions of the peace left him, with the Royal Family of France and all the émigrés, out in the cold; one cannot deny, though he is now an Englishman by choice, and contented to forget his native country, that he was then much cast down.

"For ten years," he said, "our lives have seemed an interruption; we have been in parenthesis; whatever we did, it was but as a stop-gap. We have endured hardship patiently, because it would pass. Great Britain was fighting for us; well, all that is over. The Government has abandoned us; the Revolution has succeeded; there will be no more Kings or Nobles in France."

Yes, peace was made, and the French Princes, the Royalists, and the French Nobles, who thought we should never lay down our arms until the old state of things was restored, found that they were abandoned. To me, because I now took my ideas from Raymond, it seemed shameful, and I blushed for my country. But one can now plainly see, that when an enterprise is found to be impossible, the honour of a country cannot be involved in prosecuting it any farther. It took twelve years more of war for France to understand the miseries she had brought upon herself by driving away her Princes. As soon as the opportunity arrived, Great Britain led them back again.

'Twas no great thing of a peace after the expenditure of so much blood and treasure. England, we learned, was to keep certain possessions taken from the Dutch, and to give back those she had taken from the French. But the strength of France was so enormously improved, Buonaparte being master in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and I know not what beside, that everyone prophesied the breaking out, before long, of another and a more prolonged war. This, in fact, speedily happened, as everybody knows.

The general joy, however, was wonderful. So great was it in London, that the people fought and struggled for the honour of taking out the horses from the carriage of the French Ambassador—he was a certain Colonel Lauriston, of English ancestry, and yet a favourite with Buonaparte—and dragging it themselves with shouts and cheers. The City of London and every other town in the country were, we heard, illuminated at night with the lighting of bonfires, the firing of squibs, and the marching of mobs about the streets. At Portsmouth they received the intelligence with more moderate gratitude, because, although it is without doubt a grievous thing to consider the continual loss of so many gallant men, yet it must be remembered that a sea-port flourishes in time of war, but languishes in time of peace. In time of war there happen every day arrivals and departures of ships and troops, the advance of prize money, the engagement of dockyard hands, the concourse of people to see the troops and the fleets, the fitting out and victualling of the vessels, all of which keep the worthy folk full of business, so that they quickly make their fortunes, build and buy houses, and retire to the country and a garden.

At Porchester the landlord of the tavern cursed the peace which would take from him all his custom. He, however, was the only man who did not hail the news with pleasure. As for the Castle, not only the prisoners, but the garrison as well—no soldier likes being converted into a prison warder—rejoiced. They made a great bonfire in the outer court—beautiful it was to see the keep and the walls and the church lit up at night by the red blaze of the flames; soldiers and prisoners, arm-in-arm, danced round the fire, shouting and singing. There were casks of liquor sent in, I know not by whom, and the serving out of the drink greatly increased the general joy.

After this, and until the prisoners were all gone, it was truly wonderful to see the change. First of all the soldiers with the loaded muskets were removed from the walls, and there were no more sentries, except at the gates. Why should prisoners be watched who would certainly make no attempt to escape, now that the vessels which were to carry them home were preparing for them? They were no longer enemies but comrades, and it was strange to mark the transition from foe to friend. Our journals, we heard, in like manner

ceased to abuse the First Consul, and began to find much to admire—the first time for nearly ten years—in the character of the French. Yet these prisoners had done nothing to make them our friends, which shows that Providence never designed that men should cut each other's throats, only because they speak different languages. And from this day until their departure the prisoners were allowed freely to go outside the Castle walls, a privilege which hitherto had been granted to few.

A strange wild crew they were who now trooped out of the Castle gates and swarmed in the village street. Some limped from old wounds, some had lost an arm, a leg, or an eye; nearly all were ragged and barefoot. They wore their hair hanging long and loose about their shoulders; some had monstrous great beards, and most wore long moustachios, which impart an air of great ferocity. Whether they were in rags or not, whatever their condition, one and all bore themselves with as much pride, and walked as gallantly as if they were so many conquering heroes, and at the sight of a woman would toss up their chins, pull their moustachios, stick out their chests, and strut for all the world like a turkey-cock, and as if they were all able and willing to conquer the heart of every woman. They did no harm in the village that I heard of; they could not buy anything, because they had no money, and they were too proud to beg. One day, however, I saw a little company of them looking over our palings into the garden, where as yet there was little but blossom and the first pushing of the spring leaves. I thought that in their eyes I saw a yearning after certain herbs and roots which every Frenchman loves. It was long since these poor fellows had tasted onions, garlic, or any savoury herbs. I may confess that I called on the men and made them happy with as many strings of onions and other things as they could carry, a gift which, with the addition of a little oil and vinegar, sent them away completely happy.

They were now eager to get home again, although for many, Pierre told us, the exchange would be for the worse. "The prison rations," he said, "are better than the fare which many of us will enjoy when we get home. In a campaign the soldiers have to fight on much less. Then if there is to be no more fighting, most of the army will be disbanded, and the men will betake themselves again to the plough or to their trades. But if a man goes for a soldier he forgets

his trade, his hand and eye are out; then he will get bad wages with long hours, the condition of a slave—I call it nothing else—and none of the glory of war.” Pierre spoke of glory as if every private soldier who took part in a victory was to be remembered ever afterwards as an immortal hero. “Oh! I deny not that there are some, even some Frenchmen, who love not war. Yet I confess that to them the peace is the most welcome news in the world. What? Is every soldier a hero? Does every man love the hard ground better than a soft bed? Is the roaring of artillery a pleasing sound for everyone? Not so; some men are by nature intended to drive quills, and weigh out spices, and dress the ladies’ heads. There must be grocers and barbers as well as soldiers.”

“And what will you do, Pierre?” asked Raymond.

“I hope to remain in the army. But how long will the peace continue? Think you our great General is one who will be contented to remain quiet while a single country remains unconquered? He is another Alexander the Great, he marches from conquest to conquest; he is a Hannibal who knows no Capua. There are still two countries which dare to hold up their heads in defiance of him—Great Britain and Russia. He will humble both.”

“What! You look to overrun the world?”

“Consider,” he said, “Prussia—Germany—Holland—Italy—these are at his feet. Spain is already in his grasp. Denmark—Norway—Sweden—all are within his reach. What is England—little England—against so mighty a combination? What is Russia with all her Cossacks? The peace is concluded in order that we may make more vessels to destroy your trade and take your fleets. When your ships are swept off the ocean, nothing remains except humble submission. Look, therefore, for another war as soon as we are ready, and prepare for the inevitable supremacy of France. Great Britain reduced, Buonaparte will then lead his victorious troops to Russia, which will offer nothing more than a show of resistance to his great army. When all the countries are his, and all the Kings dethroned, there will be seen one vast Republic, with Paris for its capital, and Buonaparte for the First Consul. London, Constantinople, Rome, Vienna, and Moscow, will be of no more importance than Marseilles and Lyons. All will be Paris.”

“Very good indeed,” said Raymond,

“and then your First Consul will, I suppose, sit down and take his rest?”

“No. There will remain the United States of America. India will be ours already by right of our conquest of Great Britain, and all the East will be ours because we shall have overrun Spain, Holland, and Turkey; also South America and Mexico. The United States will be the last to bow the neck. Buonaparte will fit out three great armaments, one to Canada, one to New York, and one to Baltimore. The Republicans of America will fight at first for their independence. Then they will be compelled to yield, and will join in the great confederacy, and from one end to the other the whole world will be part of the great French Republic.”

“There are still Persia, the Pacific Ocean, and China.”

“The Pacific will be ours because there will be no ships afloat but those which fly the French flag. Persia is but a mouthful. To conquer China will be but a military promenade.”

“And after this the reign of peace, I suppose?”

Pierre sighed. “Yes,” he said, “when there will be nothing left to fight for I suppose there will be peace. But by that time I shall perhaps have become a General of Division, or very likely I shall be old and no longer fit for war. Oh,” his eyes kindled, “think of the universal French Republic! No more Kings, no more priests, all men free and equal——”

“Why,” Raymond interrupted, “as for Kings, the peace leaves them every man upon his throne; and as for priests, Buonaparte’s convention with the Pope brings them back to you. In place of your fine Republican principles you have got a military despotism; it must be a grand thing when every man is free and equal to be drilled and kicked and cuffed into shape, in order to become a soldier.”

“Why,” said Pierre, “I grant you that we did not expect the Concordat. Well, the women are too strong for us. But the men are emancipated; they have got no religion left; while, for your military despotism, how else can we establish our Universal Republic? And what better use can you make of a man than to drill him and put him into the ranks? But wait till the conquest of the world is complete, and the reign of Universal Liberty begins.”

“I stand,” said Raymond, “on the side of

order, which means authority, rank, religion, and a monarchy."

"And I," said Pierre, "on the side of Liberty, which means government by the people and the abolition of the privileged class. I am a son of the people, and you, my friend, are an aristocrat. Therefore we are in opposite camps."

"Your Republic has her hands red with innocent blood, and her pockets full of gold which she has stolen. These are the first-fruits of government by the people."

"We have made mistakes; our men were mad at first. But we are now in our right senses, Raymond; for every man equal rights and an equal chance, and the prizes to the strongest, and no man born without the fold of Universal Brotherhood. What can your old Order show to compare with this?"

His eyes glowed, and his dark cheek flushed. He would have said more, but refrained, because he would not pain his friend who belonged to the other side. When I think of Pierre I love to recall him as he stood there, brave and handsome. Ah, if all the children of the people were like him, then an Universal Republic might not be so dreadful a misfortune for the human race!

"Englishmen, at least, are free," said Raymond. "Shake hands, my brother. You shall go out and fight for your cause. Whether you win or whether you lose, you shall win honour and promotion. Captain Gavotte—Colonel Gavotte—General Gavotte—Field Marshal Gavotte. I shall sit in peace at home, under the protection of the Union Jack—which may God protect."

CHAPTER V.

TOM'S UNFORTUNATE MISTAKE.

It was the evening after this conversation that my cousin Tom made so unfortunate a mistake, and received a lesson so rude that it cured him for ever of speaking disrespectfully concerning the strength and courage of Frenchmen. The affair was partly due to me; I do not say that it was my fault, because I should behave in exactly the same way again were it possible for such a thing to happen now.

My cousin rode into the village in the afternoon, as was his custom. Finding that there were no wagers being decided, cocks fought, or any other amusement going on at the tavern, he took a glass or two and walked up the street to call upon me.

"Well, Molly," he began, sitting down as if he intended to spend the afternoon with me, "when does your Frenchman go? Ha! he is in luck to go so soon."

"Tom," I said, "I forbid you ever again to mention the word Frenchman in my presence. Speak respectfully of a man who is your better, or go out of the house."

"Suppose," he said, "that I will neither speak respectfully of him nor go out of the house! What then, Miss Molly? Respectfully of a beggarly Frenchman who teaches—actually teaches drawing to anybody he can get for a pupil! Respectfully! Molly, you make me sick. Give me a glass of your cowslip, cousin."

"Well, Tom, I am not strong enough to turn you out; but I can leave you alone in the room."

I turned to do so, but he sprang up and stood between me and the door.

"Now, Molly, let us understand one another. Send this fellow to the right-about"—he pronounced it, being a little disguised, riled-up; "send him away, I say, and take a jolly Briton."

"Let me pass, Tom."

"No. Why, I always meant to marry you, my girl, and so I will. Do you think I will let you go for a sneakin' cowardly—" Here he held out his arms. "Come and kiss me, Molly. There's only one that truly loves thee, and that is Tom Wilgress. Come, I say."

At this I was frightened, there being no one in the house whom I could call. Fortunately, I thought of Sally, and, running to the window, I opened it and cried out to her to come quickly.

Tom instantly sank into a chair.

"Sally," I said, "I do not think I shall want you; but have you your rope's-end with you?"

"Ay, ay, Miss," she replied, shaking that weapon and looking curiously at Tom, whom she had never loved.

"I do not think," I repeated, "that we shall want the rope's-end. Are you afraid of my cousin, Sally?"

"Afraid! I should like to see any man among them all that I am afraid of."

"Then wait at the door, Sally, until I call you or until he goes."

"Now, Tom," I went on, "I am not without a protector, as you see. You may go. Why, you poor, blustering creature, you are afraid—yes, you are afraid to say the half in Raymond's presence that you have said to me. Fie! a coward, and try to wile a girl from her lover."

"Well—I cannot fight a woman. You and your rope's-end," he grumbled. "Say what you like, Molly."

"I will say no more to you. Sally, show him the rope's-end, if you please." She held it up and nodded. "Sally is as strong as any man, Tom, and I will ask her to lay that rope across your shoulders if you ever dare to come here again without my leave. Do you understand?"

"I am a coward, am I? I am afraid to say the half to Raymond, am I? Molly, suppose I say all this and more—suppose I thrash him and bring him on his knees?"

"Well, Tom, if you can do this you have no need to fear Sally and her rope's-end."

He went away, making pretence of going slowly and of his own accord. Sally followed him to the garden gate, and reported that he had returned to the tavern, where I suppose that he spent the rest of the day smoking tobacco and drinking brandy and water or punch, in order to get that courage which we call Dutch.

In the interval between the signing of the peace and the return of the prisoners, Pierre spent his whole time in the company of Madam Claire and in her service. He was clever and ingenious with his fingers, always making and contriving things, so that the cottage furniture, which was scanty indeed, began to look as if it was all new.

On this day Tom remained at the tavern till late in the evening, and left it at eight o'clock, coming out of it, hat on head and riding-whip in hand, with intent to order his horse and ride home. Now by bad luck he saw, or thought he saw, no other than his enemy Raymond coming slowly down the road, the night being clear and fine and a moon shining, so that it was well-nigh as bright as day. It was, in fact, Pierre returning to the Castle, but, dressed as he was, in a brown civilian coat, and being at all times like Raymond, it was not wonderful that, at a little distance, Tom should mistake him for Raymond. That he did not discover his mistake on getting to close quarters, was due to the drink that was in him.

"Ho, Johnny Frenchman! Johnny Frog!" he cried. "Stop, I say; you've got to reckon with me."

Pierre stopped.

"Don't try to run away," Tom continued. "We have met at last, where there are no women to call upon." Raymond, to be sure, never had asked the assistance

of any woman; but that mattered nothing. "Ha! would you run? Would you run?"

Pierre was standing still, certainly not attempting to run, and wondering what was the meaning of this angry gentleman dancing about before him in the road, brandishing his riding-whip, and calling him evidently insulting names.

"Ha!" said Tom, getting more courage, "a pretty fool you will look when I have done with you; a very pretty fool."

These words he strengthened in the usual way, and continued to shake his riding-whip.

Pierre still made no reply. The man was threatening him, that was certain from the use of gestures common to all languages; but he waited to brandish his riding-whip.

"French frog—Johnny Crapaud. I will flog you till you go on your knees and swear that you will never again dare to visit Molly. Ha! I will teach you to interfere with a true-born Briton!"

He shook the whip in Pierre's face, and began to use the language customary with those who are, or wish to appear, beyond themselves with rage. It was, however, disconcerting that the Frenchman made no reply, and showed no sign of submission. For Pierre perceived that he had no choice but to fight, unless he would tamely submit to be horsewhipped. Yet for the life of him he could not understand why this man was attacking him. It could not be for his money, because he had none; nor for any conduct of his which could give the man any pretext, because he had never seen him before.

The French are not good at boxing, they do not practise fighting with their fists as boys, they have no prize-fights, and in a street quarrel I have heard that the knife is used where our people would strip and fight it out. For this reason it is thought that they are not so brave as the English, and it is sometimes thrown in their teeth that they cannot hit out straight, and know not how to use the left hand in a fight.

As for their bravery, we are foolish to impugn it, because we have fought the French in many a field and in many a sea battle, and we do ourselves a wrong when we lessen the valour of our foes. Besides, it is very well known to all the world, whatever we may say, that the French are a very brave and gallant nation. Though they cannot box, they can fence; though they do not fight with fists, they can wrestle as well as any men in Eng-

land. And in their fights they have a certain trick which requires, I am told, a vast amount of dexterity and agility, but is most effective in astonishing and disconcerting an enemy who does not look for it. Suppose, for instance, that a man went out to box in ignorance of so common a trick as the catching of your adversary's head with the left hand and pummelling his face with the right. With what surprise and discomfiture would that manoeuvre be followed! Or again, imagine the surprise of an untaught man who stood up with a master in wrestling, to receive one of those strokes which suddenly throw a man upon his back. Pierre, you see, was dexterous in this French trick, of which Tom had never even heard.

The young Frenchman, therefore, perceiving that this was more than a mere drunken insult and menace, assumed the watchful attitude of one who intends to fight. He had nothing in his hand, not even a walking-stick, and was, moreover, of slighter build and less weight than his enemy. But if Tom had been able to understand it, his attitude, something like that of a tiger about to spring, his eyes fixed upon his adversary's face, his hands ready, his body as if on springs, might have made him, even at the last moment, hesitate.

With another oath Tom raised the whip and brought it down upon Pierre's head. Had the whip reached its destination there would probably have been no need to say more about Pierre. But it did not, because he leaped aside and the blow fell harmless. And then an astonishing thing occurred.

The Frenchman did not strike his assailant with his fist, nor did he close with him, nor did he try to wrench his whip from him, nor did he curse and swear, nor did he go on his knees and cry for mercy. Any of these things might have been expected. The last thing that could have been expected was what happened.

The Frenchman, in fact, sprang into the air—Tom afterwards swore that he leaped up twenty feet—and from that commanding position administered upon Tom's right cheek, not a kick, or anything like a kick, but so shrewd a box with the flat of the left boot that it fairly knocked him over. He sprang to his feet again, but again this astonishing Frenchman leaped up and gave him a second blow on the left cheek with the flat of his right boot, which again

rolled him over. This time he did not try to get up, nor did he make the least resistance when his enemy seized the whip and began to belabour him handsomely with it, in such sort that Tom thought he was going to be murdered. Presently, however, the Frenchman left off, and threw away the whip. Tom, taking heart, sat up with astonishment in his face. His enemy was standing over him with folded arms.

"You kicked," said Tom. "Yah! you kicked. You kicked your man in the face. Call that fair fighting?"

Pierre answered never a word.

"I say," Tom repeated, "that you kicked. Call that fair fighting?"

Pierre made no reply. Then Tom reached for his hat, which had been knocked off at the beginning, and for his whip, which was beside him on the ground. He put on his hat, and laid the whip across his knees, but he did not get up.

"Very well—very well," he said. "I shall know what to expect another time. You don't play that trick twice. No matter now. My revenge will come."

Still Pierre moved not.

"You think I care twopence because you bested me with your tricks? Well, I don't, then. Not I. Who would be ashamed of being knocked down by a kick on the head? Well; all the country shall know about it. What? Do you think I am afraid of you? Promise not to kick, and come on."

Although he vapoured in this way, he took care not to get up from the ground.

But Pierre made no reply, and after waiting a few minutes to see if his adversary was satisfied—to be sure he had every reason to express himself fully satisfied—he turned, and went on his way to the Castle gates.

Then Tom rose slowly, and, without brushing the mud and dirt of the road from his clothes, returned to the tavern, where the officers and gentlemen were sitting with lighted candles.

"Why, Tom," said the Colonel, who was among them, "what is the matter, man? You have got a black eye."

"Hang it," said another, "it seems to me that he has got two black eyes, and he has had a roll in the mud. What was it, my gallant Tom? Did you mistake the handle of the door for your saddle? or have you been fighting your horse in the stable?"

"Landlord, a glass of brandy." He

waited till he had tossed off this restorative, and then sat down and took off his hat. "Gentlemen," he said solemnly, looking round him, and showing a face very beautifully coloured already, where the whip had fallen upon him. "Never offer to fight a Frenchman."

"Why," said the Colonel, "what have we been doing for ten years and more?"

"With cannons and guns it matters nothing; or with swords and bayonets—I grant you that. But, gentlemen, never offer to fight a Frenchman with cudgel or fist, unless you know his tricks and are acquainted with his devilries."

"As for fighting a Frenchman with your fists, that is impossible, because he cannot use them. And as for tricks and devilries, all war consists of them."

"'Tis the disappointment," said Tom, "the disappointment that sticks."

"It will be a devil of a black eye," said the Colonel.

"You have a quarrel with a Frenchman," Tom went on. "You offer to fight him. What! can you bestow upon a Frenchman a greater honour than to let him taste the quality of a British fist? Instead of accepting your offer with gratitude, what does he do? Gentlemen, what does he do?" He looked around for sympathy.

"What did he do, Tom?"

"First, he pretended to accept. Then we began. I own that he took punishment like a man. Took it gamely, gentlemen. Wouldn't give in. We fought, man to man, for half-an-hour, or thereabouts, and I should hardly like to say how often he kissed the grass. Still, he wouldn't give in, and, as for me, so great was the pleasure I had in thrashing the Frenchman that I didn't care how long he went on."

"Well?"

"Well, gentlemen, the last time I knocked him down I thought he wasn't coming up to time. But he did. He sprang to his feet, jumped into the air like a wild cat, and kicked me—kicked me on the face with his boot so that I fell like a log. When I recovered he was gone."

"That is very odd," said one. "Who was the Frenchman, Tom?"

"Raymond Arnold, as he calls himself."

"Gentlemen," said my father, "here is something we understand not. This young gentleman, almost an Englishman, is thoroughly versed in all manly sports. I cannot understand it. Kicked thee, Tom? Kicked thee on the side of thy head? Be-

sides, what quarrel had'st thou with Raymond?"

"Why, Alderman, we need not discuss the question here, if you do not know."

"I do know; and I will have you to learn, sirrah"—my father at such moments as this spoke as becomes one who hath sat upon the Judge's bench—"I will have you to learn, sirrah"—here he shook his forefinger—"that I will have no meddling in my household."

"Very well," said Tom; "then I will fasten another quarrel upon him. Oh, there are plenty of excuses. Kicked me in the head, he did."

"As for the kicking business," my father resumed, "I should like to know what Raymond has to say. For, let me tell you, sir, you cut a very sorry figure. Your eyes are blacked; there is a mark across your face which looks like the lash of a whip; and you have been rolled in the mud. This looks as if there had been hard knocks, certainly, but not as if Raymond had got the worst of it. Landlord, go first to Madam Arnold's cottage, and ask if Mr. Raymond is there. If he is, tell him, with the compliments of this company, to step here for a few minutes. If he is not, try him at my house, where he mostly spends his evenings."

"Bring him, bring him!" said Tom. "Now you shall see what he will say. Kicked me, he did, both sides of the head. Bring him, bring him!"

In two or three minutes Raymond came back with the messenger. Whatever was the severity of the late contest, he showed no signs of punishment in the face, nor were his hands swollen, as happens after a fight, nor were his clothes in any way rumpled or his hair disordered.

The contrast between the two combatants was indeed most striking.

"Raymond," said my father, "Tom Wilgress, whose face you seem to have battered, is complaining that you do not fight fair."

"He kicks," said Tom.

"I do not fight fair? When have I shown that I do not fight fair?"

"Why," said my father, "what have you been doing to him but now?"

"Doing to him?—nothing. I have but just left your house, Alderman, where your messenger found me."

"But you have been fighting with Tom."

"Don't deny it, man," said Tom; "don't wriggle out of it that way."

"I have not been fighting with Tom or with anyone."

"This," said Tom, "is enough to make a man sick."

"It is strange, gentlemen," said my father. "Do you assure us, Raymond, that you have not fought Tom at all this evening?"

"Certainly not."

"But look at the condition he is in. Can you deny that there has been fighting?"

"It looks as if something had happened to him," said Raymond. "As for fighting, I know nothing of it. As for any quarrel, it has been whispered to me that Tom has uttered threats which I disregard. But if he wishes to fight I am at his service, with any weapon he chooses—even with fists if he likes."

"He kicks," said Tom. "I scorn to fight with a man who kicks. A foul blow!"

One of the officers asked permission to look at Raymond's fist.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Mr. Arnold's statement is proved by the condition of his hand. He has not fought; therefore, Tom, it seems as if the drink had got into thy head. Go home to bed, and to-morrow forget this foolishness."

"Ay—ay, foolishness, was it? Well, after this, one may believe anything. Look here, man"—he seized a candlestick and stood up. "Do you deny your own handiwork? Look at this black eye—and this—your own foul blow."

"You are drunk, Tom," said Raymond.

"I suppose, then, that I have not got a black eye."

"You have two, Tom."

Tom looked about for some backing, but found none, and retired, growling and threatening.

"He must have been more drunk than he appeared," said one of the company. "To-morrow he will have forgotten everything."

But he did not, nor was he ever made to believe that he was not fighting Raymond, though the truth was many times told him.

Pierre related the history of Tom himself as the thing really occurred. But as Tom continued to tell the tale, the Frenchman's leap into the air grew higher and higher, and the strength of that kick more stupendous, and the victorious character of his own fighting the more astonishing.

CHAPTER VI. A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY.

I HAVE always been truly grateful that the terrible discovery we made concerning Pierre, was in mercy deferred until the evening before his departure. It is not in human nature, as you will shortly discover, to wish that it never had been made at all, because, though the discovery overwhelmed an innocent young man with shame and grief, what would afterwards have become of Raymond had the fact not been found out?

I love the memory of this brave young man; I commiserate his end; there is no one, I am sure, with a heart so stony as not to grieve that so brave a man should come to such an end. But I am forbidden by every consideration of religion, to look upon the events which followed as mere matters of chance, seeing to what important issues the discovery led.

Consider all the circumstances, and when you read what follows, confess that it was a truly dreadful discovery for all of us. First of all, this young soldier owed his life to the nursing of Madam Claire; next, he attached himself to us, showing the liveliest gratitude and the most sincere affection, although we—that is, those of the Cottage—belonged to the class he had been brought up to hate and suspect, professing a creed which he had been taught to despise. In Madam he found a countrywoman with whom he could talk the language of his childhood, and hear over again the old stories of the Provence peasants. In her house, small though it was, he could escape from the rude companionship of the Castle, where among the prisoners there was nothing but gambling, betting, quarrelling, and drinking all day long. In her society—may I not say in mine also?—he enjoyed, for the first time in his life, the society of gentlewomen. With Madam, he learned that a woman may be a gentlewoman, and yet not desire to trample on the poor, just as Madam learned that a man may be a Republican and yet not be a tiger.

Perhaps, had he stayed longer with us, he would have discovered that the Christian religion he had been taught to deride, had something to be said for it. Moreover, in Raymond he found one of his own age whom he loved, although they differed in almost every principle of government and of conduct. It was good for us to have this young man with us daily; even the poor distracted woman grew to look for him, and talked with her husband in oracles—so we

learned afterwards to consider them—about him. If it was good for us, it was surely good for him. Consider next, that like most men, he regarded his father with respect; not, perhaps, the respect with which Raymond remembered his brave and loyal father, but with that respect which belongs to a man of honourable record, though one of the humbler class.

"Our orders have come," he came to tell us. "To-morrow we embark; the day after to-morrow we shall be in France again. After three years—well—there is not much changed, I suppose. The streets will be the same and the barracks the same. I shall find some of my old comrades left, I dare say. Happy fellows! They have gone up the ladder while I sit still."

"Your turn will come next, Pierre."

"This house, at least, I can never forget, nor the ladies who have shown so much kindness to a prisoner."

"To our compatriot, Pierre," said Madam.

"Send us letters sometimes," I said.

"Let us follow your promotion, Pierre; let us know when you distinguish yourself."

He laughed; but his eyes flashed. One could understand that he thought continually of getting an opportunity of distinction.

"Yes," he said. "If I get a chance; if I am so happy as to do anything worthy to be recorded, I will write to you."

"In two days you will be in France. The country which we are always fighting is so near, and yet it seems so far off. Why must we fight with France so continually?"

"How can you ask, Miss Molly? We respect and love each other so much that we do our best to maintain in each country the race of soldiers, without whom either would quickly become a race of slaves, so as to bring out all the virtues—courage, patriotism, endurance, invention and contrivances, watchfulness, obedience—everything. War turns a country lad into a hero; it teaches honour, good manners, and self-denial; it turns men of the same country into brothers, and makes them respect men of another country. Without war, what would become of the arts? Without war we should all be content to sit down, make love, eat and drink."

"Thank you, Pierre," I said laughing.

Then, without thinking anything, I put the questions which led to the fatal discovery.

"What shall you do when you land, Pierre?"

"First," he said, "I must make my way to rejoin my regiment, wherever it may be, and report myself. As soon as I have done that I shall ask for leave, and then I shall go to see my father."

I suppose it was not a very wonderful thing that we had never yet learned from him where his father lived and what was his calling. In the same way Pierre had not learned from any of us all the history of the family. He knew that Raymond's father was one of those who were shot at Toulon, after the taking of the town, and he knew that these two ladies, with Raymond, had been rescued from the flames of the burning city. That, I suppose, was all he knew.

"Where does he live, your father?"

"My father lives now on his estate. He bought it when it was confiscated as the property of a ci-devant. The house, I believe, was nearly destroyed by the Revolutionists. I have never seen it, because I was at school until, at fifteen, I was drafted into the army. I have often wondered how he got the money to buy the estate, because we were always so poor that sometimes there was not money enough for food."

"What was his calling?"

"I hardly know. He is an ingenious man, who knows everything. He is a poet, and used to write songs and sing them himself in the café for money. Once he wrote an opera, music and all, which was played at the theatre. Sometimes he taught music, and sometimes dancing; sometimes he acted. Whatever he did, we were always just as poor—nothing made any difference. He was a son of the people, and he taught me from the first to hate the aristocrats and the Church."

"Yes," said Madam. "It is now two generations since that education was begun. Fatal are its fruits."

"Although he was so good an actor and singer, and could make people laugh, my father was not a happy man. As long as I can remember he was gloomy. Always he seemed to be brooding over things which have been set right now—the privileges of the nobility and the oppression of the people. When the Revolution came he was the first to rejoice. Ah! those were wonderful times."

"They were truly wonderful," said Madam.

"It was in 1794, the year before I went

into the ranks, that he bought the estate. By what means he procured the money I know not. To be sure, they were cheap; the estates of the ci-devants."

"Where is your father's estate?" asked Madam.

"There was a great town house as well," Pierre went on. "Ma foi! It was not cheerful in that town house; for the mob had destroyed all the furniture, and we had no money to buy more. The rooms were large, and at night were full of noises—rats, I suppose; ghosts, perhaps. My father used to wander about the dark rooms, and, naturally, this made him grow more gloomy. All his old friends had gone, I know not where. He seemed left quite alone. Then I was drawn for the army, and I have not seen my father since."

"Where is the estate, Pierre?" asked Madam Claire again.

"It belonged to a family of tyrants. They had oppressed the country for a thousand years."

"I should like to know the name of these tyrants," said Madam.

Pierre laughed.

"My father always said so. Pardon me, ma mère. I have learned that he used to talk with extravagance; no doubt they were not tyrants at all. But they were Nobles—oh! of the noblest. The estate lies on the banks of the river Durance. There was a great Château there formerly; but it is now destroyed."

"On the Durance?"

Madam sat upright full of interest.

"Yes; not many leagues from Aix, in Provence. There is a village beside the Château called Eyragues."

This reply was like a shower of rain from a clear sky.

"Eyragues! Eyragues!" cried Madam, dropping her work. "There is only one Château d'Eyragues."

"They are talking, my dear," said the poor mad lady to the spirit of her husband, "of the Château—our Château of Eyragues. We shall go there again soon, shall we not? We spent many happy years at Eyragues. Well, my friend, if you wish it, Raymond shall go."

"Young man!" Madam Claire's hands were trembling, her face flushed, and her voice agitated. "I heard—but that cannot be—it cannot be! Yet I heard—Young man, tell me who was your father? Why did he buy the place?"

"My father is what I have said—a man

of the people, who hates aristos, Kings, and priests. I know not why he bought it. The Château was destroyed by the people of Aix soon after the taking of Toulon, and the land was sold to the highest bidder."

"Gavotte," said Madam. "I know not any Gavotte. Who could he be? There was no Gavotte in the village."

"It is droll," said Pierre, laughing. "His name was not Gavotte at all. It was Leroy—Louis Leroy. They made him change it in the times when they were furiously Republican. Louis Leroy—that could not be endured; so they called him Scipio, or Cato, or some such nonsense—it was their way in those days—and gave him the surname of Gavotte, which he still keeps."

"Oh!" Madam Claire sank back in her chair. "This is none other than the doing of Heaven itself," she murmured, gazing upon the young man, who looked astonished, as well he might.

"Much more blood, my dear friend!" It was the voice of the Countess, talking with her dead husband. "You say that there must be much more blood? It is terrible. But not again the blood of the innocent."

"This is the hand of God," said Madam Claire again.

"Why, ma mère——" Pierre began.

"Truly the hand of God."

How can I describe the transformation of this meek, resigned, and patient nun into an inspired prophetess? Madam Claire sat upright, her eyes gazing before her as if she saw what we could not see. Suddenly she sprang to her feet, and with clasped hands she spoke words which, she declared afterwards, were put into her mouth. "Unhappy boy!" she began. "Oh, you know not—you have never known—what your father did. But the people of Aix knew; and even the Revolutionists—his friends—fell from him. There is not a man in the town fallen so low as to sit in his company, or to speak with him. Learn the shameful story, though the knowledge fill your heart with sorrow and even your head with shame. His name is Louis Leroy—named Louis by his father, but Leroy was the name of his mother. His father was the seigneur of that Château which is now his own; and you—you who have been taught to hate your forefathers—you are that seigneur's grandson. I remember your father, he was a boy who refused to work; they sent him away from the village, and he

went to Aix, where he lived upon his wits and upon the money his half-brother would give him. Yes, his half-brother, who was none other than my murdered brother. And who murdered him? Unhappy man! it was your father. Oh, woe—woe—woe to Cain! It was your father who denounced his own brother at Toulon. But for him he might have escaped. Louis Leroy, whom my brother had befriended, spoke the word that sent him to his death, and now sits, his brother's blood upon his hands, in the place which he has bought for himself. Your father—alas, your father!"

"Madam," I cried, "for mercy's sake, spare him!" for the young man's face was terrible to behold.

She swayed backwards and forwards, and I thought that she would have fallen.

"The vengeance of Heaven never fails," she said. "For many years have I looked for news of this man. Once—twice—I knew not how, he has been struck. A third and a more terrible blow will fall upon him—through his son—but I know not how. Yet he has done nothing—this poor boy—he is innocent; he knows nothing; and yet—and yet—oh, Molly, I am constrained to speak."

"Oh, Madam!"

"Through his son—through his son—Oh, unhappy man! unhappy son!"

"Madam, for mercy's sake, say something to console him."

She made no reply, her eyes still gazing upon something which we saw not.

Then she suddenly became again herself—soft-eyed, gentle—and tears ran down her cheeks.

"Pierre!" she said, holding out her hands. But he shrank back. "My son whom I love; for whom I have prayed. Oh, Pierre, what is it that you have told us?" It seemed as if she knew not what she had said. "Oh, I understand now the resemblance. You are Raymond's cousin."

"My father," Pierre said presently.

"My father—a murderer?"

"Alas, it is true!"

"My father!"

"It is true, Pierre. Ask me no more. What! Did no one ever tell you of the Arnaults? Yet you have lived in our house at Aix—the old house, with the pilasters outside, and the carved woodwork within, and everywhere the arms of the Arnaults carved and painted."

"Yes; I know of these; but I knew not that you—that Raymond—I never thought that you were so great a family. I

had no suspicion of my father's birth. I knew nothing. I was told that the Arnaults were tyrants who had committed detestable crimes. That was the way they talked in those days. All the Nobles had committed detestable crimes."

"Alas! our crimes—what were they? Oh, Pierre, I would to Heaven that you had gone away before this dreadful thing had been discovered. I would to Heaven that you had never found it out at all, and so lived out your life in happy ignorance of this shameful story. There are things which Heaven will not suffer to be concealed. It is through me that you have found out the truth; forgive me, Pierre. Let us forgive each other and pray; oh, you cannot pray, child of the Revolution! Pierre—" he was so overwhelmed with shame, his cheek flushed, his lip quivering, his head bent, that she was filled with pity—"Let us console each other. After the town was taken, I think my brother might have been killed, whether any witnesses were forced to speak against him or not. Yes, the evidence mattered little; he was the Comte d'Eyragues; he was one of those who brought the British troops into the city; yes, he must have been condemned."

"But my father denounced him. And here—" he pointed to the Countess.

"She is the victim of that dreadful night which no one can ever forget who passed through it, and of the suspense when we waited anxiously for news of her husband, but heard none till we landed at Portsmouth and learned the truth."

At this moment Raymond opened the door and burst into the room.

"Courage, Pierre!" he cried, joyously, "to-morrow you shall leave your prison. I wish thee joy, brother, promotion, and good fortune. When we go back to our own, if ever we do, I promise thee a hearty welcome, if it be only among the ruins of our old house."

Pierre made no reply.

"You will write to me, will you not? That is agreed. Tell me how everything is changed, and if it is true that there are no longer any men left to till the fields, but the women must do all the work. If you go to Aix go and look for our house—everybody knows the Hôtel Arnault—tell me if it still stands."

Still Pierre made no reply.

"Molly, have you nothing to give him, that he may remember you by? You must find a keepsake for him. Pierre, it is the English custom for friends when

they part to drink together. We will conform to the English custom."

Thus far he talked without observing how Pierre stood, with hanging head, his eyes dropped, his cheek burning, the very picture and effigy of shame. Raymond laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"Come, comrade, let us two crack a bottle as the English use——"

But Pierre shrank away from him.

"Do not touch me," he cried, "do not dare to touch me. I am a man accused."

He seized his hat and rushed away.

"Why," asked Raymond, in astonishment, "what ails Pierre?"

"We spoke," said Madam Claire, quietly, "of the Revolution in which his father took a part, and we have shamed him."

"They spoke," echoed the mad woman, "of the Revolution. He is a child of the Revolution, which devours everything, even her own children."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE PRISONERS.

TWICE has it been my lot to witness the general departure of prisoners after the signing of peace between Great Britain and France, namely in the year 1802 and the year 1814. As for their arrival, it seems now as if they were being brought in every day for nearly two-and-twenty years, so long, with the brief interval of one year did this contest rage. Besides the general discharge there was a constant exchange of prisoners—chiefly, I believe, those who were sick and disabled, from serving again—by cartel. A general discharge is quite another thing; for, immediately before such an event, the prison rules are relaxed, the prison becomes transformed into a palace of joy. There is nothing all day long, except singing, dancing, and drinking; one would believe, to witness these extravagant rejoicings of the soldiers and sailors, that they were released for ever from all hardships of toil and service, and that the Reign of Plenty, Leisure, and Peace was immediately to begin.

"But Liberty," said Raymond, "is the dearest of all man's rights; and, besides, at home they have their wives and sweet-hearts. Love, Molly, is not confined to this island of Great Britain."

Those who made the greatest show of rejoicing were certainly the French; the Spaniards, as they took their imprisonment sullenly, received the news of their release

without outward emotion. No one, it is certain, can seriously wish to return to a country where they have the Inquisition. The Dutch, of whom many, as I have said, had volunteered for British service, heard the news of the peace with national phlegm; the poor negroes, most of whom were dead and the rest fallen into a kind of stupid apathy, were unaffected; the Vendean privateers with terror, thinking that General Hoche was still in their midst, ready to shoot them down.

The embarkation of so many prisoners was not effected in a single day. Some were sent across to Dunquerque; some—those from Portsmouth and Porchester—to Dieppe; those from Plymouth—some of whom were taken across in coasters—to Havre.

In the morning of the embarkation the narrow beach was crowded with those who came, like ourselves, to bid farewell, for we were not the only people who had friends among the prisoners. They came from Fareham, from the country round Southwick, from Cosham, from Titchbrook, and from Portsmouth and Gosport. There were sea-captains among them, come to see once more the prisoners they had made; with them were army officers, country squires, and young fellows, the country Jessamys, like my cousin Tom, who had made friends among the French officers at horse races, over the punch bowl, and at the cockpit. They came riding, brave in Hessian boots and padded shoulders. Among them were many ladies, and I think it is true, as was then alleged, that many a sore heart was left behind when the young French officers were released. But only to see the heartiness of the farewells, the happiness of those who went away, and the congratulations of those who sent them away, and how they shook hands, and came back, and then again shook hands, and swore to see each other again—'twould have moved the stoniest heart! Who would have thought that yonder handsome officer, gallant in cocked hat, blue coat, and white pantaloons, amid the group of English ladies, to whom he was bidding farewell, was their hereditary enemy? Or who would believe that yonder grey-headed veteran, clasping the hand of a jovial Hampshire squire, had fought all his life against Great Britain? Or, again, could that little company, who had so often met at the cockpit, or at the bull-baiting, and who now were drinking together before

they separated (my cousin Tom was one), become again deadly enemies? Alas! why should men fight when, if they would but be just to others and to themselves, there would be no need of any wars at all? Lastly, there were the rank and file, the privates and sailors, drinking about in friendship with our honest militiamen, as if the Reign of Peace was already come, instead of a short respite only.

I suppose there was never seen so various a collection of uniforms on this beach. Among them were the sailors of France, Holland, and Spain, alike with differences. Dress them exactly alike, if you will, but surely no one would ever take a Frenchman for a Hollander, or a Spaniard for a Frenchman. I know not what are the various uniforms of the Republican army, but here were grenadier hats of bearskin, round beavers, hats with the red cockade, cocked hats with gold lace, caps with a peak and a high feather, the old three-corner hats, the common round hat with a red plume, the brass helmet, the red Republican cap, the blue thread cap, and a dozen others. And as for the coats and facings, they were of all colours, but mostly they seemed blue with drab facings. The French naval officers, in their blue jackets, red waistcoats, and blue pantaloons, looked more like soldiers than sailors. Some of the officers had been prisoners for five or six years, so that their uniform coats were worn threadbare, or even ragged, their epaulettes and gold lace tarnished, and their crimson seams faded. Yet they made a gallant show, and but for the absence of their swords, looked as if they were dressed for a review. The common sort were barefoot—which was common in the Republican armies—and is no hardship to sailors. Some of them having quite worn out their own clothes, wore the yellow suit provided by the British Government for the foreign prisoners.

Among the prisoners were their two priests. They, at least, were well pleased that the Reign of Atheism was over, and religion was once more established according to the will of the Pope.

Now, as we passed through the throng, the men all parted right and left, Madam saying a last word now to one and now to another of her friends, while even those who scoffed the loudest at religion, paid the lady the respect due to her virtues. She was an aristo, and they were citizens, equal, and of common brotherhood—at

least they said so: she a Christian and they atheists; she a Royalist, and they Republicans; yet not one among them but regarded her with gratitude.

She spoke to a young fellow in the dress of a common sailor, who looked as if he belonged to a better class, saying a few words of good wishes.

"Yes," he replied bitterly, "I go home. When last I saw the house it was in flames, when last I saw my father he was being dragged away to be shot; my mother and sisters were guillotined in the Terror, and I escaped by going on board a privateer. What shall I find in the new France of which they speak so much? They have left off murdering us; I suppose they will even suffer me to carry a musket in the ranks."

Apart from the groups of those who drank, and those who exchanged farewells, we found Pierre standing alone with gloomy looks.

"My son," said Madam, "we have come to bid you farewell."

He raised his eyes heavily, but dropped them again. The sight of Madam was like the stroke of a whip.

"It is not so bad for you to look upon me as for me to hear your voice," he said.

"Pierre, my son"—she held out her hand, but he refused to take it, not rudely, but as one who is unworthy—"Pierre, be patient. As for what has happened, I was constrained to tell you. Oh, I could not choose but tell you. Yet it was no sin or fault of yours, poor boy. If any disaster befall you by act of God, accept it with resignation. It is for the sin of another. Count it as an atonement—for him. So if sufferings come to you—what do I say? Alas! I must be a prophetess, my son, because I know—yes, I know—that disaster will fall upon you, but I know not of what kind. Yet be assured that there is nothing ordered by Providence which can hurt your soul."

"My soul!" cried Pierre impetuously. "My soul! What is it, my soul?" He laughed in his Republican infidelity. "What is it, and where is it? It is my life that is ruined, do you understand? You have taken away my honour—my pride—and my ambition. You have taken all that I had, and you bid me think of my soul."

"When you go to the South—to Aix—you will see your father, Pierre. Fail not, I charge you, fail not to tell him that we

have forgiven—yes, three of us have forgiven—the dead man, and the mad woman, and the religieuse—and the fourth—the son—does not know. Say that we all forgive him, and, for the sake of his son, we pray for him.”

Then Pierre, in the presence of the whole multitude—no British soldier would have done such a thing—fell upon his knees and kissed Madam's hand. When he rose his eyes were full of tears.

“Pierre,” I said, “remember, you have promised to send us a letter. Write to me, Pierre, if not to Raymond, will you not?”

He shook his head sadly. “If,” he said, “there should happen anything worth telling you, anything by which you could think of me with pity as well as forgiveness, I would write.”

As you will hear presently, he kept this promise in the end.

Truly it was sorrowful to see the young man, so full of shame, who, but the day before, had been so full of joy and pride. Happy indeed is he whose father has lived an honourable life! It is better to be the son of a good man than the son of a rich man.

“I have no right,” he said, “to ask of you the least thing.”

“Ask what you please, Pierre.”

“Then, if it be possible, let not Raymond know. We have been friends, we have talked and laughed together, I have accepted from him a thousand guits; let him not know, if it can be avoided, that the man who—who now lives at Château d'Eyragues is my father.”

“We will not tell him. Raymond shall learn nothing from us that will trouble his friendship for you, Pierre.”

We kept our promise, but, had we broken it, how much misery we should have spared Raymond! how different would have been the lot of Pierre!

“We will never tell him,” I repeated. “Oh, Pierre! We are so sorry—so sorry. Forget yesterday evening, and remember only the happy days you have spent with Raymond and with me.”

But then his turn came. The great ships' launches were drawn up, each rowed by a dozen sailors, and commanded by a midshipman, who steered. The last time these launches came up the harbour, in each boat stood a dozen marines, stationed in the bow and stern, armed with loaded muskets and fixed bayonets, while every sailor had his cutlass, and the

boat was crammed with prisoners gloomy and downcast. Now the only arms on board consisted of the midshipman's dirk, there were no marines, the sailors had no cutlasses, and they hailed the prisoners with cheers.

Pierre pressed my hand, and once more kissed Madam's fingers. Then he took his place. The rest of the boat-load showed every outward sign of rejoicing, Pierre alone sat in his place with hanging head.

“They are gone,” said my cousin Tom. He had been drinking and his face was red. “They are gone. Well, there were good men and true among them. Would that the rest of their nation would follow! especially all—I say—who kick when they fight. Well—every man gets his turn.”

The launches kept coming and going day after day until the last prisoner was taken off the beach. Then the garrison was left in the Castle by itself.

When the militia regiments were presently disbanded and sent home the Castle was quite empty. Then they sent boats from the Dockyard with men, who carried away the hammocks and the furniture, such as it was; took down the wooden buildings, and carried away the timber; pulled down the canteen, the blacksmiths' and carpenters' shops, burned the rubbish left behind by the prisoners, and left the Castle empty and deserted. We might climb the stairs of the keep to the top, passing all the silent chambers, where so many of them had slept; the chapel was stripped of its altar; the stoves were taken out of the kitchens; and the grass began to grow again in the court, which had been their place of resort and exercise. There were no traces left of the French occupants, except the names that they had carved on the stones, the half-finished carvings in wood and bone, which they left behind, and the rude tools which they had used. Once, I found lying rusted in a dark chamber one of the daggers which they made for themselves with a file, sharpened and pointed, stuck in a piece of wood. Strange it was at first to wander in those empty courts, and to think of the monotonous time which the cruel war imposed upon those poor fellows.

“They are gone,” said Raymond. “Well, let us hope that every man will find his mistress waiting faithfully for him. As for Pierre, who certainly had a bee in his bonnet, his only mistress is Madame la Guerra. He loved no other. She is horribly old; covered with scars,

hacked about with sword and spear, and riddled with shot. Yet he loves her. She is dressed in regimental flags, she gives her lovers crowns of laurel which cost her nothing, titles which she invents, and a promise of immortality which she means to break. Poor Pierre! We shall never see him again, but we may hear of him."

CHAPTER VIII.

HE CANNOT CHOOSE BUT GO.

THUS began the Peace, which it was hoped would be lasting, but came to an end after a short twelve months. Porchester became once more the village out of the way, standing in no high road, without travellers or stage-coaches. In its quiet streets there were no longer heard the voices of the soldiers at the tavern, or those of the prisoners on parole, or the nightly watch. There is never a hearty welcome to peace from those who prosper by war. I confess that when the boat came back with half its contents unsold, one was tempted to lament, with Sally, that war could not go on for ever. As for the towns of Portsmouth, Portsea, and Gosport, their condition threatened to become deplorable, because the Dockyard was reduced, the militia sent home, and many thousands of sailors paid off. It has been said, by those who know Portsmouth well, that the petition, every Sunday morning, for peace in our time, meets with a response which is cold and without heart.

Now, however, all the talk was concerning France open to travellers after the years of Republican government. Not only did the prisoners go back, but the émigrés themselves, thinking that, although their estates were gone and their rank had no longer any value, it was better to live in one's native land than on a strange soil, began to flock back in great numbers. Great Britain had abandoned their cause; why should they any more stand apart from their own people? They went back trembling, lest they should find the guillotine erected to greet their return. But times had changed. The people had found out that even though there were neither Kings nor Nobles, their lives were not a whit easier and their work just as tedious. But the France to which they returned was very different from the France in which they had grown up, and the old Order was clean gone with the old ideas.

Not only did the émigrés return, but

crowds of English travellers flocked across the Channel to see Paris, which had been closed to them for ten years. They met, we are told, a most gracious welcome from the innkeepers, tradesmen, and all those with whom they spent their money.

Is it, then, wonderful that Raymond should grow restless, thus hearing continually of the country which, however much we might pretend to call him an Englishman, was really his native land.

"Molly," he said, "I am drawn and dragged as if by strong ropes towards the country. I feel that I must go across the Channel, even if I have to row myself over in an open boat and walk barefoot all the way to Paris. I must see Paris. I must see this brave army which hath overrun Europe."

"But, Raymond, it would cost a great sum of money."

"Yes, Molly,"—his face fell—"more money than we possess; therefore, I fear I must renounce the idea. Molly," there were times when Raymond flashed into fire, and showed that a gentle exterior might cover a sleeping volcano, "Molly, this village suits thy tender and gentle heart, but it is a poor life, only to endure the days that follow. The lot of Pierre, though the end may be a corpse with a bullet through the heart, seems sometimes better than this."

This was no passing fancy or whim, but the desire grew upon him daily to see his native country, inasmuch that he began to take little interest in anything else, and would be always reading or talking about France. It has been wisely observed of all émigrés that in secret they rejoiced at the wonderful triumphs of the French arms under Buonaparte—successes far surpassing any other in history, even under the great Turenne himself.

In a word, nothing would serve but that Raymond must go. He had but little money, and it was necessary that he should have enough for his expenses, though he was to travel cheaply. Therefore, the usual expedient was resorted to, and the rest of the small jewels taken from the Holy Rose.

He left us.

"There is no danger," I said to Madam Claire. "The country is peaceful, and he will be as safe as with us at home."

"I know not, child," she replied. "When I think of France, I see nothing but maddened mobs rushing about the streets, bearing on their pikes the heads

of innocent women and loyal men. Yes—yes—I know. All that is over. Yet I remember it.”

“The First Consul has turned all these mobs into soldiers.”

“And there is the man Gavotte. Suppose Raymond should fall into his hands.”

“Why, France is large. It is not likely that they will meet. And the man could not harm Raymond if he wished.”

“My dear,” she said, pointing to the Holy Rose, striped and bare, “all the jewels are now gone. There is nothing left but the trunk and the dead branches.”

He travelled with a passport which described him as Raymond Arnold, British subject, and artist by profession. Had we carefully devised beforehand the method which would be most likely to lead to his destruction, we could not have hit upon a better plan. For, while France was most suspicious of British subjects, the passport described him as one, it concealed his nationality, altered his name, and gave him the profession which would most readily lend colour to suspicion, and support to the most groundless charges.

CHAPTER IX. RAYMOND'S JOURNEY.

So Raymond left us, and for my own part I had no fears, none at all. Why should there be dangers in France more than in England? In both countries there are thieves, murderers, and footpads. In both there are honest men. Those who consort with honest men do not generally encounter rogues. Raymond was not one of those who put themselves willingly in company where rogues are mostly found. We had letters from him. First a letter from Paris. He had seen the First Consul at a review of troops. “He was, after all, only a little man,” Raymond wrote, “but he wore in his face the air of one accustomed to command.” At this time he was little more than thirty years of age, yet the foremost man in all Europe. “Molly,” Raymond said, “I confess that my heart glowed with admiration at the sight of this great commander and that of the brave troops whom he hath led to so many victories. They are not tall men, as you already know from the sight of the prisoners, but they are full of spirit, and their marching is quicker than that of our own—the British troops. I forget not that here I

am an Englishman travelling as a subject of His Majesty King George. I am staying at a hotel in the Rue St. Honoré, one of the principal streets in the town. The place is full of English visitors, and we all go about with our mouths wide open, looking at the wonders of Paris. I shall have plenty to tell you, dear, in the winter evenings. I have seen the place where the Bastille stood, and the great Cathedrals of Notre Dame and St. Denis, and the Palaces of the Louvre and Versailles; above all I have seen the prison of the Queen. The people are very lively and fond of spectacles and theatres, fairs and noise. I find that my French is antiquated, and there are many words and idioms used which are strange to me. But the Parisians talk a language of their own, which changes from day to day, and is always full of little terms and illusions, which no stranger or provincial can understand. Last night I went to the Théâtre des Variétés to hear a Vaudeville which contained a hundred good things, all of which I lost from not understanding the talk of the day. The ingenious author of the piece was this morning shown to me at a café. This happy man, who can make a whole theatre full of people laugh and forget their troubles, is himself one who is always laughing and singing.”

If I refrain from copying more of Raymond's letters you must not suppose that they were short, or that they contained nothing but his adventures and observations. They were long letters, delightful to read, only there were some passages which in reading them aloud I was compelled to pass on in silence, because they were meant for no ear but mine. The things which a lover whispers to his sweetheart must not be told to anyone, though, indeed, I suppose all men say much the same things, since our language contains no more than a dozen words of endearment, so that they have no choice. Now, after Raymond had been in Paris about three weeks, he thought that he must begin his journey south.

He travelled by the stage coach, which in France is called a diligence; it is much slower than our flying coaches, while the roads are much worse than ours, being not only narrow but also rendered dangerous by the deep ruts made by the heavy waggon. Before the Revolution they were kept in repair by forced labour. The roads being so bad, it is not wonderful that people travel no more than

they are obliged. The diligence is, however, cheap, and as its progress is slow, one can see a good deal on the way. Thus Raymond saw the Palace of Fontainebleau, formerly inhabited by the Kings of France; he visited also the old city of Dijon, once the capital of Burgundy; the city of Lyons, which was destroyed by the Revolutionary army a little before they took Toulon, and many other places, all of which are set down in the map of France, which we now keep to show the children how great a traveller their father has been. He also made many drawings on the way, some of the women in their white caps, some of the peasants, some of churches and castles, but all these drawings were lost by an unexpected event, which I have presently to tell you.

At Lyons he left the stage coach and took passage on one of the boats which go down the Rhone, and are called water coaches. They are crowded with people, and one sleeps on board, but the cabins are close, and there is not room for all to lie. Raymond found, however, that this mode of travel was vastly more pleasant than the coach with the dust and the noise. This journey terminated at a place called Arles, from which he wrote to me.

"I am at last," he said, "in my own country, among the people who use the language of my childhood. It is strange to hear them all talking as we love to talk in our cottage at Porchester. One seems back in England again. The people think it strange that an Englishman should know their tongue. I told them that I knew an English girl who knows the language and can speak it as well as myself. They are friendly to me, though they have the reputation of being quick-tempered and ready to strike. We stayed an hour or two at Avignon, where is an old broken bridge over the river, and in the town there are many remains of antiquity, with stone walls, and a great building once the palace of the Pope. At the town of Arles, where I write, there are Roman buildings; a vast circus all of stone, where they used to have fights of gladiators, and where the people used to throng in order to witness the torture of Christian martyrs. . . . My dear, I am now within two days' journey of my birthplace. The nearer I draw, the more dearly do I remember it. The Château d'Eyragues stands upon a low cliff rising above the river Durance, which is wide and shallow,

and subject to sudden floods. It is a large white house, with an ancient square tower at one end. The windows, which are small and high, are provided with green jalousies to keep out the sun. There is a broad verandah in front of the house; on one side is a garden, and on the other side a farmyard, with turkeys, and fowls, and geese; here are also the dogs and the stables, and here is a great pigeon-house, with hundreds of pigeons flying about. It is the privilege of the Seigneur to keep pigeons, which eat up the corn of the farmers. Overhead is a sky always blue; the hills are bare and treeless; there are groves of grey olives, and the fields, which for the greater part of the year are dry and bare, are protected from the cold mistral wind by a kind of screen made of reeds. There are vines in the fields, and there are groves of mulberry trees planted for the sake of the silkworms. It is, I confess, a country which few love save those who are born in it. The people are passionate, jealous, and headstrong; they do nothing in cold blood; they hate and love with equal ardour. My Molly, you love one of them. Will you be warned in time?

"To-morrow I leave for the Rhone, and make for Aix, whence it is but a short journey to the village of Eyragues. How well I remember the last time I went to Aix! We travelled in our great gilt coach, hung upon springs, from the Château to our house. It must have been early in the year 1793. My father was already melancholy and a prey to gloomy forebodings. But he was the Count d'Eyragues, and a grand Seigneur, and now his son is plain Mister Arnold, and a humble English traveller, who cannot afford post-horses, but journeys in the panier with the common folk. Adieu, my well-beloved; I will write to thee again from Aix."

A week later there came another endearing, delightful letter.

"I am at Aix," he said. "I am at last, and after a tedious journey of three days, at Aix. The distance, which is not quite fifty miles, or thereabouts, from Arles, would be covered on an English high-road in a single day. Here, however, the roads are bad, the carriages heavy, and the horses weak and in poor condition. All the best horses, I am told, have been taken for the cavalry. The road is not, moreover, what you would call a high-road, but a cross-country road, passing over a level plain through villages; and the coach,

which is little better than a great, clumsy basket, was filled with farmers and small proprietors, talking of bad times and the war. There was also a commis-voyageur, that is, a travelling clerk, or rider, going, he told me, from Arles to Aix, and thence to Toulon. He wanted to talk French to me, and was continually expressing his astonishment to find that an Englishman should wish to visit this part of the country at all; and, secondly, that an Englishman should be able to speak the Provençal language. I told him I was often surprised myself, because, with the exception of a single young lady of my acquaintance, there was probably no one in England, apart from the émigrés, who could speak it like myself.

" 'Monsieur,' said my commis-voyageur, 'has the air of a Provençal. Oh! quite the air of a Provençal. I have seen Englishmen. There are English prisoners at Marseilles; and I have seen English sailors at Bordeaux. Never did I see an Englishman who resembled Monsieur.' This gentleman is right, and he, for his part, has the air of one who suspects me. Let him, however, suspect what he pleases. I have my passport. I am not a political agent, and I am engaged in nothing that I wish to conceal. I conversed freely with the people. Alas! they are no longer Royalists. The events of the last ten years have turned their heads. Though the wars have made them no richer, but have killed their young men and laid the most terrible burdens upon the country—it is certain that France has suffered far more than England—the splendid successes of the French arms have turned their heads. Nevertheless, everybody is afraid that war may break out again at any moment—in Paris they speak openly of speedily sweeping us from the seas—and pray that the peace may be lasting.

"I asked them about many things: the condition of the country, the change from the old order—I understand now that it can never return—the army, the state of religion, the cultivation of the fields—everything that one wants to know when returning to his native land after a long absence.

" 'Decidedly,' said my friend, the commis-voyageur. 'Monsieur is curious. Monsieur probably proposes to write a book of travels.'

"The road is lined for the greater part of the way with plane trees, all bent over in the same direction and at the same height,

by the mistral wind, just as on the King's bastion at Portsmouth the trees are all bent down by the wind from the sea. At this season Provence looks green and beautiful; the planes are coming into leaf, the Arbre Judas, which grows in the gardens, is in full flower; there is white-thorn in plenty; the mulberries have not begun to lose their leaves; while the cypresses, of which my people are so fond, and their grey olives, and even the long lines of reeds with which they shelter their fields from the mistral, look well behind the green maize. In two months the white road will be a foot deep in dust, the leaves by the roadside will be white with dust, and the mulberry trees will be stripped of their foliage for the silkworms. As for flowers, there are few here compared with those in the English fields; but there are some, especially when a canal for irrigation runs beside the road, crossed here and there by its passerelle—the little foot-bridge. There are few wayfarers along the road, and in the fields the workers are chiefly women.

"Our journey took three days, the sleeping accommodation in the villages being poor, but better than that in the boats. Here, at Aix, everything is good and comfortable.

"I have been sketching in the town; I have made a drawing of our town house, which is an old house in a dark and narrow street. It stands round three sides of a court, in which are lilacs and fig-trees, and a fountain. I did not ask to whom the house now belongs, but I begged permission of the concierge to sketch it. There being no one at home I was allowed to sit in the court and make my drawing. I have also sketched the cathedral and the church of St. John, where my ancestors lie buried. Happily, their tombs were not defaced by the Revolutionists.

"My dearest Molly, there remains to be seen only the old Château, and the place where my father died. Some day, perhaps, we may be able to erect a monument to him as well, though his body lies we know not where.

"To-morrow I walk to Eyragues, which is not more than ten miles from Aix. Shall I find the Château as we left it? But my father, who used to walk upon the terrace before the house, will be there no longer. I hope to write from Toulon. Farewell, my love, farewell!"

The letter reached us at the end of April. We waited patiently at first for the

promised successor. None came the next week, and none the week after. Then I, for my part, began to grow impatient. Day by day I went out to meet the post-boy from Fareham. Sometimes he turned at the road which leads to the Castle, and blew his horn at the Vicarage. But none for me. And the weeks passed by and nothing more was heard.

Now, by our calculations, the time for a letter to reach Porchester from Aix being eighteen days, if Raymond had arrived at Toulon about the middle of April, supposing that his business kept him there no more than two or three days, he would proceed to Marseilles, and thence make his way as rapidly as he could across France, and so home, and should arrive by the middle of May. That is the reason, I said, trying to assure myself, though I spent the nights in tears and prayers, why he has not written another letter, because he is posting homewards as speedily as he can travel and comes as fast as any letter. He will be with us, therefore, about the middle of May.

The middle of May passed and he did not return, nor was there any letter from him.

Now on the 18th of May in that year, a very grave step was taken by His Majesty the King. He declared war against France. Those who were in State secrets have since assured the world that this step was not taken without due consideration, and a full knowledge of its importance; and, further, that in declaring war, the King only anticipated the intentions of Buonaparte, whose only reason for deferring his declaration was that he might find time to build more ships.

Well, even though war was declared, Raymond was a man of peace who would be suffered to return. It was not likely that a war, which would not greatly move the hearts of the people, the causes for which lay in political reasons which they could not understand, would exasperate the French against a simple English traveller.

Letters, it is certain, sometimes miscarry; from the South of France to Hampshire is, indeed, a terrible distance. Our traveller would come home before his letter, war or no war.

Thus passed seven weeks, and then we heard that Buonaparte, by an exercise of authority which was wholly without parallel in the history of nations, had ordered that all Englishmen travelling in France, even

peaceful merchants and clergymen, should be detained. Among them, no doubt, was Raymond.

But other *détenus*, as they were called, wrote letters home, which were duly forwarded and received. Why did not Raymond write?

It was through me—oh, through me, and none other—that he went away. I encouraged him to talk about his old home; I fed the flame of desire to see it again. Had it not been for me he would have stayed at home, and now we should have been all happy together—safe and happy. But now—where was he? In a French prison, in rags, like our French prisoners, with no money. How could we get to him? How help him? How know even where he was?

"My child," said Madam Claire, "we are in the hands of Heaven. Do not reproach yourself. Raymond was filled with longing to see his native land again. Nay, what can have happened to him but detention with the other English travellers?"

While I wept and wrung my hands, and Madam Claire consoled me, and we sought to find reasons for this long silence, it was strange to listen to the poor mad woman, laughing and singing, and talking to her dead husband, chiefly about Raymond.

"The boy has grown tall, my friend," she would say. "The time comes when we must find a wife for him; then, in our old age, we shall have our grandchildren round us. When he comes home he shall marry; he will come now very soon."

It seemed as if in some imperfect way she understood that her son was gone somewhere. Perhaps it was to comfort us that she kept repeating the words, "He will come home soon; he will come home soon."

Alas! the time soon arrived when those words were a mockery!

It was at the beginning of the tenth week that we received one more letter in that dear handwriting. But what a letter. Oh, what a letter! for it left us without one gleam of hope or comfort.

"I should meet my love in Heaven," said Madam. Alas! Heaven at nineteen seems so far away; and to one whose heart is wholly given to an earthly passion, Heaven seems a joyless place. Sure I am that if when one is young the choice was offered of a continuance of earthly joys, which we know, with youth and health and plenty, or of the unknown heavenly joys, though

we are plainly told that mind cannot conceive, and tongue cannot tell their raptures, we should, for the most part, prefer the former.

Oh, this letter! Can I, now, think of it without a sinking of the heart, and a wonder that the letter did not kill me on the spot. The postman stopped at our garden-gate; 'twas a morning in June; the lilacs and laburnums were still out; all the roses were in blossom, and the sun was so warm that one was able already to sit in the open air. At sight of the man my heart leaped up. He had a letter for me, which he held up and laughed—for he knew my impatience and anxiety—and I rushed to the gate and took it. Yes, it was in my Raymond's handwriting. I left the postman to get his money from Sally, and ran as fast as I could to the cottage, my letter in my hand.

"A letter!" I cried. "A letter from Raymond! Oh, at last, at last; now we shall know!"

Then I tore open the seal and read it aloud.

"MY DEAREST MOLLY.—This is the last letter you will ever receive from your lover—"

His last letter?

"Quick!" cried Madam; "read it quickly."

"I am in prison at Toulon. I have but a few minutes given to me for this letter, in which I should have said so much had I time. My dear—my dear—I am about to die. Farewell. Try to forget me, my poor heart. Oh, think of me as one who lived in thy heart for a little and was then called away. I am to be guillotined for an English spy in the very place where, ten years ago, they shot my father. It is strange that my death should be like his, and in the same way. I am not a spy, as you know; but I have failed to convince my judges. I was tried this very day, and I am to die to-morrow morning amidst the execrations of the people. Is not this a strange destiny for father and son? Kiss my mother for me. By the time this letter reaches you she will be already conversing with the spirit of her son as well as that of her husband; for, my dear, where could my spirit rest if not near thee? And, if my father's soul hath obtained this privilege, why not mine? My spirit can have no terrors for thee. I had much to tell; but now you will never hear what has happened to me

and why. I am promised that this letter shall be sent to thee. To-morrow I am to die. Farewell—farewell—farewell. Oh Molly, my sweet girl, I kiss the place where I write thy name. Farewell, my dear. Farewell—"

I know not how I was able to read this letter aloud, for every word was like a dagger plunged into my heart. Oh! a thousand daggers would have been better than this letter so full of love and pity, and yet so terrible with its message.

Pass over this day. Think, if you can, how Madam fell upon her knees and prayed—not for herself, but for me; think how I sat with dry eyes speechless; think how my father came and wept; think how all the time the poor mad lady laughed and sang as happy as the blackbird in the orchard, and repeated, like a parrot in a cage: "He will come home soon; he will come home soon."

CHAPTER X. IN THE TOWER.

It was not until six months later, and under circumstances which will be related in their place, that we heard what happened after Raymond left Aix.

The village of Eyragues is about ten or twelve miles from Aix, along a dusty, white road, with plane-trees on either side or avenues of the spreading poplar, or when a village or a farm-house is passed, cypresses and chestnuts.

It was late in the afternoon when he arrived at the place.

A low hill rises, steep on the south side, and on the west with a gentle slope. The village stands upon the slope, and on the top of the hill, where the cliff looks over the valley of the Durance, stood the Château. Here the valley is broad and the stream shallow, running over its gravel bed with a melodious ripple, as if it was the most innocent brook in the world, though no river is more dangerous, by reason of its sudden inundations. In the cliff overlooking the river there are caves, partly natural, partly artificial; these are used as dwelling-houses by the poorer peasants and the shepherds, the entrances being closed with wood. The village itself consists of one sloping street, in the middle of which is the church, and beside it the presbytere, or vicarage; opposite to the church, the village inn, with three shrubs in great green casks before the door, and the bunch of dry briar hanging over the door.

As Raymond drew nearer, approaching the village from the west, he remarked two or three things which seemed strange. There were no cattle in the meadows. Why, the meadows were formerly full of cattle. The bed of the river seemed to have grown broader than he remembered. When one revisits places, seen last in childhood, they generally look smaller. The buildings in the valley were roofless; the caves showed no sign of inhabitants.

He entered the street. There had been quite recently a dreadful fire, and most of the houses were destroyed wholly or in part. Those which had escaped were shut up. The village auberge had its bush above the door, and its three shrubs in green tubs in front; but the door was closed, and the shrubs were dead.

And then he heard footsteps. At last, then! There was someone in the village. An old woman came out of a cottage beside the inn. She came hobbling upon two sticks, looking curiously at the stranger. She was bent with years, wrinkled, and decrepit. She advanced slowly. Suddenly she burst into a cackling kind of laugh not pleasant to hear.

"Ho, ho!" she cried. "You are come at last. Oh! I knew you would come some day. I told him that you would come."

"Who am I, then?"

"I knew very well that you would come. But I knew that you would not come before the proper time. Oh, everything in its place. First the inundation; that carried away his cattle and destroyed his meadows. Next the burning; that took away his village. What has he left to take? There is only himself, or his son. Are you come for him, or shall you take his son?"

Raymond remembered her now. But she was old when he had last seen her, ten years before; already an old woman, living with her grandchildren.

"I know you, Mother Vidal," he said. "Why, what, in Heaven's name, has happened?"

"You are young again, M. le Comte. Those who come back from the dead do well to resume their youth. In heaven we shall all be young and beautiful. Hush! He is horribly afraid. At sight of you I think he will drop down dead."

"Who?"

"Louis Leroy. Who else?"

"Where are the people, then?"

"They are gone. The war took some;

the inundation took some; the burning sent the rest away. The village is deserted. The people would stay no longer in a place accursed, lest something worse should befall them. But, as for me, I am old. Nothing can hurt me now."

"Why is the place accursed?"

"Is it for you, M. le Comte, to ask such a question? The curé told him, when he went away, that the wrath of the bon Dieu was kindled against him. Go up the hill; you will find him at the Château."

An empty and deserted village; the houses mostly burned down; nobody in the place. Here was a prospect of a pleasant night.

Raymond went on up the hill, and before long came to the top, on which the Château stood. Alas! the modern part of the house was destroyed, only the shell remaining, and beside it the ancient tower. The gardens were grown over; the farm buildings were in ruins; the great dovecot was empty. There were no signs of life about the place at all.

There was yet about half-an-hour of daylight, and Raymond sat down to make the most of it. He would have time to sketch the ruins, and he would then retrace his steps, and put up for the night at some auberge on the way to Aix.

The tower, however, was not uninhabited. Presently a man came forth from the great doorway.

He was dressed rather better than the peasants, but looked neglected, his chin unshaven, his hair without powder, his coat old and worn. When Raymond, who had taken off his hat and was working bare-headed, saw the man at the door he rose to salute him. To his amazement the proprietor of the tower, if the man was the proprietor, shrieked aloud and staggered.

Raymond ran to his assistance.

"Are you ill?" he asked.

The man made no reply, but his lips trembled. Raymond saw before him a man of forty-five, or perhaps fifty. His face was wolfish—the face of a man who lives alone and thinks continually of wickedness—yet the features might once have been fine.

"I am afraid," said Raymond, "that in this lonely place I have startled you. I am, however, only a harmless traveller, and I have taken the liberty of sketching this ruin, in which I have an interest."

The man recovered a little.

"I am subject," he said, biting his nails,

"to sudden fits of pain. You were saying, sir, that you are a traveller."

"I am a traveller and an artist. It is my practice to make drawings of all the places which I visit."

"An artist! It is strange. What is your name, sir?"

"My name is Arnold. Would you like to see my passport?"

"Not at all, sir. Arnold! What is your Christian name?"

"It is Raymond."

"Then, sir," said the man, speaking slowly, "unless I am mistaken, your father's name was also Raymond. His full name was Raymond Arnault, Comte d'Eyragues. He was killed, I believe, at Toulon, after the capture of the city by the Revolutionary army."

"All this, sir, is quite true, though I understand not how you know it."

"I know it from the likeness you bear to your father, coupled with the fact that you bear his name—"

"Were you a friend of my father's?"

"Young man, your father was a great man. I was one of the canaille. He had no friendship for such as I."

"An old woman in the village mentioned the name of Louis Leroy—"

"There is no Louis Leroy in this place. There has not been anyone of that name for many years," he replied quickly.

"Well, sir," said Raymond, "I am Raymond Arnault. But I am now an Englishman, and have only come here in order to see the place where I was born. That is natural, is it not?"

"Quite natural. I am the proprietor of the estates, such as they have become. A valuable possession, truly. The river has washed away my cattle and my meadows; a fire has destroyed my village; the people have gone; the house is in ruins. A valuable possession, truly."

"Is the old house in Aix also yours?"

"That is also mine. But I cannot let it, for they say that it is haunted. Then you do not know who bought this estate?"

"I have never learned."

"Well, it matters nothing. Louis Leroy—I knew him well—has been dead, I think, for a long time. You were not in search of him? No? You do not know that it was he who denounced your father. Some sons might have sought revenge. You do not? That is well. Revenge is a

foolish thing to desire. Better let him alone, even if he be still living."

"The man shall never be sought by me. If I were to find him—if I had my fingers on his throat—I do not say."

"Ah, your blood is Provençal—your hands would be at his throat! Yes, I think I see you. You have the Arnault face, and it is fierce when roused. Yes, you would make short work of Louis Leroy if you had the chance. Ha, ha! he will do well to keep out of your way. That is quite certain—quite certain. Ha, ha!"

The man chuckled and rubbed his hands. The thought of Louis Leroy being throttled pleased him. He showed his teeth when he laughed, which made him look more like a wolf.

"Come," he said, "one of your family must not be sent away from this place. Share my dinner, and take what I can give you for a bed. Oh, it is not much—a poor meal and a simple pallet! But such as they are I offer them to you."

Raymond accepted willingly. The man was not prepossessing to look at, but one must not judge by first impressions. Therefore, he followed his host, thinking himself lucky to get the chance of a supper and a bed.

His host led the way into the tower. The room into which the door—a great, massive door, set with big nails and provided with a solid lock—opened was a room with stone floor, stone walls, and a vaulted stone roof. A second door in the side opened upon spiral stairs leading to upper rooms. The room was furnished with two chairs and a table. There was a stove in it, and the smell of some cookery. His host lifted a saucepan from a fire of wood ashes.

"You are ready for your dinner? Good; then sit down."

He poured out the contents of the saucepan into a dish, and set it on the table with a long loaf of bread, the salt, and a bottle of wine.

"It is a stew," he said, "of rabbits, rice, onions, and beans. Eat, Monsieur le Comte."

Raymond was hungry, tired, and thirsty. He made accordingly an excellent meal, drinking freely of the black and strong Provence wine. His host ate and drank but little. When the first bottle was finished he brought out another, and encouraged his guest to talk, asking him a hundred questions, and appearing deeply interested in his replies; so that the young man freely

spoke of himself—of his circumstances, and the condition of his people; how his mother had lost her reason, and his father's sister had miraculously preserved the Holy Rose, on which they had subsisted until now; but that the jewels being by this time all sold, he was to become the support of the family.

"I understand," said his host; "they have now nothing left, so that if you were not to return they would starve."

Raymond was also easily induced to show the drawings which he had made.

"Young man," said his entertainer, biting his nails, "you are going to Toulon, you say? I can show you all the best spots for an artist. Do not forget to bring your portfolio of sketches with you. And upon my word"—he looked Raymond full in the face—"upon my word, young man, I feel as if your business was already completed, and you were standing where your father stood. It will be deeply interesting."

It was then about ten o'clock. Raymond asked permission to go to bed.

"This way," said his host, taking the candle and mounting the stairs. "You will find nothing but a mattress and a blanket. Behold!"

There were two rooms on this floor, divided by a partition wall. The one into which Raymond was shown was lighted by a single narrow window, barred with iron and without glass. A mattress lay in a corner; there was no other furniture in it.

"You remember the place, without doubt; formerly it was a store-room; the accommodation is simple."

"Thank you," said Raymond, "it will serve me very well."

"I sleep in the next room. There is no other occupant of the tower. It is silent here at night when one is alone. There are ghosts, I am told, especially of your father. But I never see him. He was denounced, you know, by Louis Leroy, who was his half-brother. Ha! if you had your fingers upon his throat! Good night and good repose, Monsieur le Comte."

Raymond quickly undressed, and threw himself upon the mattress. In a few minutes he was asleep.

In the middle of the night he had a dream. He dreamed that he woke up suddenly; the moon was shining through the bars of the window so as to send some light to the room. Then he saw,

lying quite still and having no desire to move, the door between the two rooms slowly open. He was not in the least afraid, being in a dream, but he wondered what was going to happen. Then he saw his host standing at the open door. He had taken off boots and coat. For a few moments he stood as if uncertain. Then he began to move slowly and cautiously towards the mattress. Raymond saw that he had a knife in his hand. But he was not in the least afraid, because he was in a dream; the man proposed to murder him, perhaps. That was interesting and curious. How would he be prevented?

Suddenly the murderer sprang back, throwing up his arms, and with a moan of terror rushed from the room. And in the middle of the room, just where the moonlight fell, Raymond saw, in this strange dream, the figure of his father. This did not surprise him either. But he was glad that the murderer had been stayed in his purpose, and he wondered what he would say about it in the morning.

When Raymond woke up the sun was already high; he rose quickly and dressed. His host was up before him. Strange to say, he had quite forgotten his curious dream.

CHAPTER XL THE KISS OF JUDAS.

RAYMOND forgot, I say, his dream of the man with the knife. Had he remembered it, he would have been ashamed of it, so friendly was his entertainer. He led him about the place, showed him how the greatest inundation ever known in the history of the Durance River had destroyed his cattle, overthrown his farm-houses, and covered his meadows with stones and gravel. "But this," he said, always biting his nails, "might have happened to anyone. If your father were living it would have happened just the same."

"I suppose it would," said Raymond.

Then the man led his guest through the village.

"When you were a child," he said, "the village was full of people. There were five hundred souls in this place. Here was the tavern where they drank; here was the church where they went to mass; under these trees the lads played at bowls on Sunday morning; many a time have I seen your parents watching

the villagers on their way home after mass; in the evening they danced here."

"You know the place, then? You are not a native of the village?"

"I have been here on business. They plundered your house at Aix; then they came on here and sacked the Château. The books and pictures they burned and trampled under foot, the furniture they broke up, but the plate they carried off. However, the estate remained, and the village; now there is nothing. Then came the inundation; then these young men had to go to war; when the village was burned down there were not fifty people left. And now they are gone, and there is nobody except myself and an old woman who is mad. But all this would have happened whether your father was shot or no—would it not?"

"I suppose it would," said Raymond. "One cannot think that the wrath of Heaven for my father's murder would fall upon innocent folk."

"No—no. It would fall on the head of Louis Leroy. Ah! if your fingers were once about his throat. However, the man is dead."

The man was very friendly, and yet Raymond was ill at ease with him, and he had a trick of glancing suspiciously about him as if he was afraid of something, which made Raymond uncomfortable.

He was so friendly that he accompanied Raymond back to Aix, and from Aix to Toulon, where he said that he had business. He was so very friendly that he followed the young man about everywhere, and seemed unwilling to suffer him out of his sight.

At Toulon he acted as guide, and led Raymond to the spot where his father suffered death.

"Here, beneath these trees," he said, "sat the Commissioners, Fréron, young Robespierre, and the others. Eh! they are all dead now. They sat in chairs; the prisoners were brought here to be tried. Oh, they were all aristocrats, and they had no chance. Among them were a few poor devils who were servants. They were shot, to deter others from serving Royalists. Some of them were ladies—oh, I assure you, beautiful ladies, but all pale and trembling with terror. Well, they had not long to wait. Some of them were mere children, some old men, some were young men, like your father. Some of them wept and lamented, especially the servants, when they saw that there would

be no favour shown to any, but every man and woman must be taken impartially and placed in front of the soldiers; but most bore themselves proudly, like your father. Young man, there never was anyone prouder than your father. I, who was standing by, remember the contempt with which he regarded his judges."

"What did he say to the witness, his half brother?"

"He said—nothing," the man replied with hesitation; "what could he say?"

"Did he curse him?"

"He did not."

"What has the lot of that man been since that day?"

"He had nothing to lose; therefore, if he is a poor man now, he is no worse off than he was before."

"But he is dead, you say?"

"Louis Leroy has been dead for a long time."

"Had he children of his own?"

"He had one son only."

"Perhaps, then," said Raymond, "Heaven will strike him in the person of his son."

"Here," the man continued, "each man stood to take his trial. On this spot stood the witnesses, when there were any. In your father's case there was one only; but he was enough. Here stood the prisoner when his turn came to be shot; here stood the file of soldiers. Oh, it was a day of vengeance for the Revolution."

Raymond took off his hat reverently before the spot where his father had perished.

"Very likely," continued his guide, "your father might have escaped but for the man Leroy, who first caused him to be arrested—perhaps you did not know that—and then gave evidence against him. There were several thousands left in Toulon when the English went away. There were not more than eight or nine hundred shot. Very likely he would have escaped. As for that man Leroy," he went on, "you would like to have your fingers in his throat, would you not?"

"If I had," said Raymond hoarsely, "I would kill him here—where my father died."

"Ah! he is dead now. That is fortunate for him. He lived in great fear, because misfortune always fell upon him—just as it has upon me. But the thing he never thought upon, the danger he least expected, was the return of the Count's son. What should he do if he were living now?" There never could be eyes more

full of meaning and suspicion than this man's. "What should he do?"

"I care not; what does it matter?"

"He would protect himself, would he not?"

"I suppose so. Now leave me, if you please. I wish to be alone."

The guide obeyed; that is to say, he withdrew a little. But he watched. Meanwhile Raymond tried to people the scene, now a peaceful market-place, full of stalls and market women, with the prisoners, soldiers, and commissioners of that day of massacre. Then he took out his sketch-book and made a drawing of the Place.

When he had finished his drawing he remembered the Quai, where he had stood with his mother all through that fearful night, the shells hissing and bursting in the air, the flames of the arsenal making it as light as day. It was easy to find the place. From the Place d'Armes a street leads straight to the spot. The sight was very different now. The harbour was full of men-of-war, frigates, and all kinds of war vessels, a sight which might have filled an English sailor's heart with joy, giving rich promise of prizes. The Quai itself was covered with all kinds of ships' gear. There was the sound of hammering and the running to and fro of men. For an outbreak of war with England was again imminent, and the work of the dockyards was carried on night and day.

Raymond looked about him, trying to remember, which was in vain, where they had been standing.

Then he took out his sketch-book again, and began to sketch. Behind him at a little distance a gend'arme watched him. Beside the gend'arme stood Raymond's host and friend whispering furtively.

When he had completed this little drawing he rose, and began to wander about the town, glad to be alone. His work was done. He had seen his ancestral home, shattered and ruined; he had visited the old church at Aix where the bones of his forefathers were buried; he had seen the great house which had been their town residence; he had stood upon the spot where his father was shot, and upon the Quai, whence he was dragged with his mother by the English sailors; now there remained nothing more but to go home.

He wandered about the town, thinking of these things, and of his journey home, and of his sweetheart. Presently, he found himself at the fortifications. Without any thought of danger he sat down before a

gate and began to sketch it. There was nothing especially interesting about the building, yet he made a drawing of it.

He did not observe that the gend'arme who had watched him making his sketch on the Quai had followed him, and was still watching him at a distance. When he had drawn the gateway, he walked out of the town, having no object but to wander about aimlessly until the evening. On the following day he would begin his homeward journey.

Outside the town, half-way up the hill on the western side, there stands an outpost or fort, which, when the British troops held the town, was also held by them, and called Gibraltar, because it was considered impregnable. It commands the town, and from its bastions a fine view is obtained of the harbour, the arsenals, the town, and the fortifications. This fort was taken by Buonaparte. It was the first act by which he distinguished himself; and, once taken, the capture of the town was rendered easy.

Raymond, following a winding path, presently found himself within the bastion. He looked over the rampart and found that it commanded a beautiful view of Toulon Harbour, which, with the dockyard, the walls, and the town, lay stretched out at his feet. Again he drew forth his book and began to sketch the view before him. Presently he heard footsteps approaching, but he thought nothing of them, and went on with his work.

"I arrest you in the name of the Republic."

A heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder. Raymond sprang to his feet. It was a gend'arme; behind the gend'arme were a dozen soldiers.

"Why do you arrest me?"

"I arrest you as an English spy, detected in the act of making a plan of the fortifications."

Raymond laughed. The man pointed to his sketch, on which some parts of the walls were already drawn.

"Come with me," he said.

Raymond obeyed. Resistance, indeed, would have been impossible. The man took from him his sketch-book, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

The soldiers followed. When they were within the town a crowd began to gather, and presently ominous cries were uttered: "English spy! English spy! Death to spies!"

Then the crowd pressed closer, and cried

the louder. Fists were shaken in Raymond's face; voices were raised crying for immediate justice. "A la lanterne!" The crowd grew larger, and the cries louder and more threatening.

There is no rage more unreasonable, swifter, and more uncontrollable than the rage of a mob. Raymond would have been torn to pieces but for the soldiers who had accompanied his capture, and now surrounded the prisoner, and acted as a guard.

At last he was within the prison walls and in safety for the moment. Outside, the mob raged and shouted; it was a war-like mob, composed chiefly of sailors and soldiers, whom the very word "spy" maddens. They would have liked nothing better than to have the English spy thrown out to them.

When Raymond found himself stripped of everything, and thrust roughly into a cell, he consoled himself by thinking that a charge so absurd could not be maintained. He should be released the next day.

He was mistaken.

In the morning he was taken before a magistrate.

On the table were laid the sketches taken from his portfolio, his drawing pencils, his passport, his pocket-book, and his purse.

The prisoner, asked to give an account of himself, stated that he was an English subject named Raymond Arnold; that he was an artist by profession; and that he was travelling for his pleasure in France.

On further examination he confessed that his name was Raymond Arnault, and that he was a French subject by birth, and the son of the *ci-devant* Comte d'Eyragues, condemned to death for treason. He also confessed that he taught the young officers of the British navy the art of drawing plans of fortification; he declared that he had no other motive in visiting this part of France but the natural curiosity of seeing once more his birthplace, and the place where his father died; also that he was actuated in making these sketches by no other motive than the desire of preserving alive his recollections of these scenes.

His preliminary examination was short; now it was completed, he was taken back to prison.

Two days afterwards he was again taken before the magistrate, who asked him a great number of questions as to the object

of his journey, and the various places he had visited. His note-book was produced, and he was asked why certain facts had been set down, and for what reason he had shown so great a curiosity into the condition of the country. Raymond replied as well as he could, explaining that these notes were nothing but the simple observations of a traveller. His answers were taken down without comment. He then requested permission to send a letter to the British Ambassador at Paris. This request was at once refused, on the ground that he was not a British subject.

On the third examination, the magistrate, who was not hostile or unnecessarily harsh, pointed out to the prisoner that his case was one in which the penalty, should he be found guilty, was nothing short of death; that the aspect of the case was most serious; that the relations between France and England were already strained; and that should war unhappily break out before his trial, it would probably go hard with him. Therefore, he exhorted him to confess everything, including the secret instructions given him by the British Government, and the nature of the information he had collected.

Finding that the prisoner remained obdurate, the magistrate ordered him to be taken back to prison.

He had already been in prison three weeks. He was forbidden to write any letters, or to communicate with the outer world at all. An ordinary criminal may get this indulgence, but not a spy. More than this, he was treated by the gaolers with every indignity they had the power to inflict upon him, the men letting him understand daily that they would enjoy nothing so much as to murder a British spy.

"I could not understand," he told us afterwards, "I could never understand all that time, how such a suspicion could possibly fall upon me. Nor was it till I heard the speech of the advocate for the prosecution, and the evidence, that I was able to see the weight of the suspicions against me."

CHAPTER XII. THE TRIAL.

If the time had been tranquil, I suppose that Raymond would have been immediately released. But the air was filled with rumours and suspicions; the dock-yard of Toulon was active; ships were

being fitted out; there was talk of nothing but war. Therefore the most innocent action, such as the drawing of a gateway, or a sketch of the Quai, was liable to be exaggerated into the action of an English spy. Added to this was the fact, now known to all, that the prisoner was not a British but a French subject; that he was travelling under an assumed name; and that he was the son of one who had been instrumental in bringing the British troops into Toulon.

He was brought to trial three weeks after his arrest, having been kept all this time in close confinement, except for his examination by the magistrate. In accordance with French custom, he was in ignorance of the evidence, if any, on which the charge against him was to be supported; but he knew that he was accused of being a spy in the service of the British Government.

I suppose that, innocent or guilty, there cannot be a more terrible thing for a man than to stand a trial on a capital charge, and more especially on such a charge as this, where a hostile feeling against the prisoner is sure to exist.

When Raymond found himself in the great Hall of Justice, placed in the prisoners' box, he was at first confused and in a manner overwhelmed. The tribunal, as it is called, was occupied by three judges. On the right of the tribunal sat the jury, on the left was the prisoners guarded on both sides by gend'armes. The advocate for the prisoner stood immediately before his client, so that he could communicate, and the counsel for the prosecution was on the opposite side. A large table below the tribunal was occupied by clerks, and the great body of the hall was crowded with spectators. The windows were so placed that their full light fell upon the features of the prisoner, so that no change of countenance could escape the eyes of judge or jury.

The clerk first read the indictment.

It was to the effect that Raymond Arnault, born at the Château d'Eyragues, only son of the late Raymond Arnault, commonly called Comte d'Eyragues, who was shot for treason to the Republic, was a spy, engaged by the British Government to collect information as to the condition of the country, make plans of fortresses, learn the state of the arsenals, the number, armaments, etc., of ships fitted out or building, with all other facts and information which might be useful to the British

Government and prejudicial to the Republic.

The indictment read, the President began the trial by putting questions to the prisoner. These were nothing more than those already put by the magistrate in his examinations. They made the prisoner give his name, his age, and occupation; they inquired into the reasons which made him undertake the journey, and why he travelled under a false name; why he made sketches; why he made certain entries in his note-book; why he asked questions everywhere.

"You travelled from Lyons to Arles in a water-coach," asked the President, "and from Arles to Aix by diligence. On the way you conversed with the other passengers."

"I did. I was pleased, after ten years, to talk with Frenchmen again."

"You asked questions of everybody."

"If I did it was out of pure curiosity. The questions were such as to call for no information that might not be published to all the world."

"What? You inquired into the condition of the army; you asked if the country was not drained of fighting men; you asked if the women were obliged to do all the work in the fields; you inquired whether the people were good Republicans, or whether they wanted the Bourbons back again; you call these questions such as might be published."

"I repeat," said Raymond, "that the questions I asked were solely out of curiosity."

It appears that in France the judges examine and cross-examine a prisoner before the witnesses are called, and that they have thus the power to make him criminate himself, which is contrary to our custom.

When the question was finished, Raymond having to repeat a dozen times his solemn denial that he was engaged and paid by the British Government, the witnesses were called.

"I was curious," said Raymond, "to see who these witnesses might be, and you may judge of my astonishment when the first witness was no other than my host of Eyragues, and that he was none other than the man Louis Leroy himself; and then I understood all."

Yes, the man who had received and entertained him, who had given him advice, and accompanied him to Toulon, was no other than the man Louis Leroy.

"My name," he said, in answer to the President, "is now Scipio Gavotte; before the Revolution it was Louis Leroy. I am a proprietor. On the 20th of April last I observed the prisoner walking about the ruins of Eyragues, a village which has been burned and is now abandoned. He was making sketches. I accosted him, and inquired his name and business. I gave him dinner and a bed in my own house. He began by saying that he was an Englishman, but on my discovering that he spoke Provençal and had the air of a native to this country, he confessed that he was by birth a Provençal, and that he was travelling under an assumed name under protection of a British passport. I began, therefore, to suspect something, and accompanied him to Aix, where I found him making sketches of the walls, and to Toulon, where he began, trusting to his passport, to make plans of the Quai and harbour and drawings of the ships. I gave him no warning, but communicated the facts to a *gend'arme*, who watched him and arrested him. The prisoner seemed to me a man of great intelligence, and showed himself most curious in respect of everything connected with the condition of the country."

He had nothing more to say, but the counsel for the defence asked him two or three questions.

"Are you," he asked, "the same Louis Leroy on whose evidence the prisoner's father was shot on December 19th, 1793?"

"I am the same man."

"You gave that evidence, knowing that it would cause his death?"

"Certainly."

"You were his half-brother, I think."

"I was."

"And you purchased his confiscated estates?"

"I did."

"Did you reveal these facts to the prisoner?"

"I did not."

"Did you give the information which led to his arrest in the hope of getting him out of the way?"

"I gave the information for the good of the Republic."

The next witness was the commissaire-voyageur who had travelled with the prisoner in the diligence between Arles and Aix. This person deposed that his suspicions were aroused by observing the prisoner, who professed to be an Englishman, conversing with the country people in their own language; whereas the

ignorance of Englishmen, even in French—a language known and universally spoken by every other civilised nation—was notorious. He further stated that, on listening to the conversation, he found that the young man was asking the people questions concerning their political opinions, their views as to the Republic, the state of their industries, and the drain of the young men by the recent wars. Finally, he declared that he had seen the prisoner from time to time making notes and drawings in a little book which he carried. He identified the book, which was handed to him for the purpose, and pointed out—partly with indignation and partly as a proof of the truth of his statement—that among the drawings was one representing himself in an attitude grossly insulting. In fact, Raymond had drawn a picture of this man eating his breakfast like a hog.

The counsel for the defence refused to ask any questions of this witness, and desired to confirm his testimony. All that he had stated was true.

The next witness called was the *gend'arme* who had followed and watched Raymond. He swore that he saw him sitting on the Quai drawing the ships; that he followed him and watched him while he made a sketch of the *Porte de Marseilles*; that he again followed him, and found him in the act of making a plan of the fortifications.

Counsel for the defence asked this witness whether the prisoner had made any attempt at concealment. Witness replied that he had not.

"Did he not openly seat himself on the Quai and make the drawings before the eyes of all present?"

"He did."

"Did he show any embarrassment or terror when you arrested him?"

"He did not. He laughed."

There were no other witnesses except the note-book and the sketch-book.

Then the prisoner's counsel rose to make his speech.

He began by relating, from the prisoner's point of view, the history of his life. He was born in this part of France, and was fourteen years of age when he was taken from Toulon by the British fleet, on the capture of the city; that he was carried, with his mother and aunt, to Portsmouth, where they were landed; and that he had lived in a small village near to that town; and that, finding it necessary to adopt some profession in order to make a liveli-

hood, he had become a teacher of drawing and painting. To this he added the art of fortification and drawing plans, and that his pupils were chiefly young officers of the army. "Gentlemen of the jury," he went on, "consider, if you please, that this humble and obscure person was absolutely unknown to anybody connected with the British Government. He has never spoken to an official person; he is ignorant of politics. But it is not difficult to understand one feeling which survived in his breast, after ten years of exile, namely, love of France and the desire to see again his native country. It was to gratify this desire, and with no other object whatever, that he made this journey. Why, then, did he assume the name and procure the passport of a British subject? It was in order to escape questioning about his origin and family. Like all *émigrés*, he was uncertain of the reception he would meet, as the son of an aristocrat, and of one sentenced to death and executed for treason towards the Republic. But, gentlemen, it was not an assumed name; it was the name by which he was commonly known in England—the Anglicised form of his own name. As for the questions which he asked of everybody, I confess that I see nothing in them but such as would be prompted by the natural curiosity of one returning to his country after ten years—and those ten years the most momentous and the most glorious in the whole history of the country. Gentlemen, there is his note-book; read it, I beg of you, with unprejudiced eyes. There is nothing in the notes, I submit, which would be of the least advantage for a foreign country to know. Then there remain the sketches. Gentlemen of the jury, examine these for yourselves. There are the ruined *Château* where the prisoner was born; the house in Aix which belonged to his ancestors; here is the *Place d'Armes* of this town; here is a sketch of the busy and crowded *Quai*, with the ships and harbour; here is a drawing of the *Porte de Marseilles*; and here is the unfinished drawing which caused his arrest. Gentlemen, the *gend'arme* who arrested him states that it was a plan of the fortifications. I submit that it is nothing of the kind. It would have been, when finished, a drawing of the view from the bastion on which he stood, showing the town, with the harbour, arsenal, and the walls. I can find in these drawings nothing that can disprove the prisoner's own statements. Add to this that there was not

found upon him a single document of a suspicious character, unless the pencil portrait of a young lady is suspicious; that the prisoner was but poorly supplied with money; that his movements were open for all to see; and that every statement of his which could be proved has been tested and found true. There is one other point, gentlemen, that I would press upon you. The British held this town for several months. Do you think it possible that they should have gone away without taking a plan of the fortifications with them? Do you think it likely that they should have sent this young man on an errand so useless and so dangerous? Would anyone be so foolish as to accept such a mission?"

With these words the counsel sat down. So clear and reasonable was the defence that Raymond would probably have been acquitted, but for a most untoward accident. There was heard from the street outside a great shouting and roaring of men, and an usher brought a note to the President, who read it, and after handing it to his brother judges, gave it to the counsel for the prosecution; evidently something had happened of importance, for he sprang to his feet, and began a speech of the most furious kind.

"I rise," he said, "to demand justice upon a traitor to the Republic—the son of a traitor. Was he ignorant when he left England that the King of Great Britain had already resolved on war? Was he ignorant that war was to be declared immediately? Yes, gentlemen of the jury, immediately. War has been declared. The news has just reached this town. The huzzas of the crowd which you have just heard demonstrate the spirit with which we have received this news. Already the fleets which are to humble the pride of our enemies are preparing in our harbours; already our brave sailors are exulting in the approaching downfall of the enemy of freedom and justice.

"Gentlemen, let us not be revengeful, but let us be just. Consider the circumstances. It is natural that the enemy should wish to learn everything possible concerning our armaments and the state of the country. Since, then, it is natural to expect that English spies are among us in disguise as innocent travellers, what sort of person would Pitt select for a spy in this country? First, it is absolutely necessary for him to know the language. But in Provence our common people do

not speak French, but the *Langue d'Oc*. Probably there is not one living Briton who knows that language. Some there may be who have read the *Troubadours*, and know the tongue spoken in the Middle Ages, but for the common talk of the peasantry, the patois, there needs a man who was born and brought up among them. Such a man he found in the prisoner. He is an *émigré*. His father was shot for treasonable correspondence with the British. The title and the estates which might have been his are lost to him. It is the Revolution which has ruined him. Therefore, he hates the Revolution, and regards the success of our arms with envy and disgust. He had lived so long in his native country before his exile, that he can never forget the language of its people—in fact, he was already fourteen when he was taken away by a British ship. On the other hand, he has been so long in England that he can now speak English perfectly, and pass himself off for an Englishman. While in this country, in appearance and in language he can appear, if he please, as an honest Provençal.

"There is, again, another circumstance in favour of the selection of this young man. He is an artist. That is to say, he can draw, paint, and plan—especially plan. In England his residence, when not employed in service of this kind, is Portsmouth, which is to Great Britain what Toulon is to France. There he enjoys the society of the British officers, to whom he teaches the art of making plans and drawings—of what? Of fortifications. So that we have in this young man all that combine to form the perfect spy. Given the conditions of his birth and his education and we might predict beforehand what would be his work. Poor, like all *émigrés*; filled with hatred to the Revolution; eager for revenge on account of his lost wealth and rank; an Englishman one day, a Provençal the next; intelligent, well educated, a draughtsman, and, perhaps—it is in the blood of Provence—brave. Behold the spy of Pitt! Behold the tool of the British Government! Yet a willing instrument, and, therefore, one which must be rendered useless for any future work, as an example and a discouragement."

"All this time," Raymond tells me, "while the advocate thundered, and even I myself began to feel that after all I must be a secret messenger of the British Government, I was filled with that strange feeling that the issue of the trial concerned

some other man. Until the moment when I wrote the letter to you, which I thought would be my last, I was callous to an extent which I cannot now understand. For certainly no man ever had an escape such as mine."

The jury, without hesitation, gave their verdict—the prisoner was guilty. Then the President sentenced Raymond to death, and he was taken away.

Outside the court there was such a crowd as had never been seen before, yelling death to the English spy, and demanding that he should be given up to them.

Amid a storm of execrations he was taken back to his cell in safety.

"Even then," said Raymond, "in the midst of the savage faces, and with the certain prospect of death, I was insensible. It was as if I was playing a part, and that the principal part, of a play."

What it was that supported him through this time of trouble, I know not; but, remembering Raymond's dream at the Château and the strange events which followed, and his mother's constant companionship with her dead husband, and the assurance which she received as to her son's safety, I have formed a judgment which nothing can shake.

At last the prisoner was safely lodged in his cell, the key turned, and the mob dispersed, hungering for the moment when he should be brought forth to be beheaded in their sight.

CHAPTER XIII. AT HOME.

It was in the second week of June when Raymond, as we judged, had been already dead for three weeks, that we received his last letter. Indeed, I cannot bear to think even now or to speak of that terrible time, in which nothing could bring consolation, not even weeping. Raymond was dead. Then was all the sun taken from the heavens, and the warmth from the air, and the joy from my life. There were others who mourned for Raymond besides myself; but we women who lose our lovers are selfish, and we think not of any others.

It is good for those who mourn and refuse to be comforted, that they should be forced by necessity into thinking of other things. It was about the end of October that I was compelled to turn away my thoughts from my own sorrows. I have said that with the arrival of peace and the

paying off of the ships, the profits of our boat greatly diminished. This decrease grew worse as ship after ship was paid off, and none were put into commission except to relieve the regular West India and Mediterranean Fleets. Many days during the summer of that year the boat returned with half her cargo unsold. If this was the case in the summer, when we looked to make our chief harvest, what was to be expected from the winter? Day after day passed, and not enough business done to pay even the wages of Sally and her father. More than this; there was no longer any demand for our dried sloe leaves, and Portsmouth herbalists bought no more of our drugs.

I regarded this change at first without the least concern. Was it likely that the daughter of a substantial merchant should be rendered anxious by so small a matter? Besides, this was the most delightful season in my life, being in the first six months of my engagement, and, naturally, I thought all day long of Raymond.

In winter, we have little to sell except potatoes, onions, and cabbages. This winter it appeared that no one wanted to buy our things at all, because there were so many who sold and so few to buy. Thus it is with a sea-port town. A long war gives rise to many new trades. Where there was one shop there are seen, after a few brisk years, ten; where there was one market-garden there are ten. Then Raymond went away. Was it likely that I should concern myself about the boat when I had to prepare for his departure? Whose hands but mine prepared his linen and packed his trunk?

In the spring a great misfortune fell upon us. I mean, a misfortune apart from the dreadful letter of Raymond's. War was declared, and we thought to recover our losses, the dockyards being busy day and night, the harbour full of vessels in commission, and Spithead and the Solent crowded with ships waiting for convoy. The promise of April was beautiful. Never were trees thicker with blossom. Then there came a hard frost one night which did dreadful damage, and after this a cold east wind which destroyed whatever escaped the frost. After the east wind, the weather grew suddenly hot, and then came swarms of caterpillars, the like of which I have never seen before or since. They stripped the currant, gooseberry, and raspberry bushes of leaf and fruit; they left not a single strawberry; they ate up

our asparagus, our young peas, our beans, and our lettuces. They left us nothing. It was like the plague of locusts which fell upon the land of Egypt, and ate up every herb of the land and all the fruit of the trees.

And now there was no use for the boat to go down the harbour, because there was nothing to put into her.

Very soon, naturally, the day came when I had no more money to pay even the wages, and none for the housekeeping. Note that, like all the world, in the prosperous times we had kept a good table, and my father had taken his punch nightly, as if the fat times were going to last. I declare that I had no suspicion at all of the truth. My poor father had always spoken of himself as a substantial merchant. It was thus that he qualified himself. Everybody regarded him as a merchant, who had retired with what is considered a substantial fortune. To be sure, I had never seen any evidence of that fortune; but there was no need to draw upon it, seeing that the garden provided amply for the needs of the house; and, besides, is a daughter to suspect her father of exaggeration? However, there was now nothing to be done but to inform my father of the circumstances, namely, that we had nothing hardly to sell and no money for wages. For a garden must be kept up. If labourers are not continually employed upon it, how is anything to be made out of it?

Nothing ever surprised me more than the effect of my communication, for my father first turned pale and then red. He then rose, and softly shut the door.

"My child," he said, and there his voice stuck. "My child," he began again, and a second time he was fain to stop and gasp. "Molly"—this time he made an effort and succeeded—"I feared that this was coming, but I would not worry you. What are we to do? What in the wide world shall we do?"

"Why, sir," I said, "if you will find the money to tide us over this bad season, I doubt not that we shall do very well, seeing that the war has begun again and times are brisk."

"Find the money, child? I find the money? Molly," he whispered, "listen, child: I have no money. Yes, you all think me a man of substance, but I am not. Molly, your father is a man of straw—a man of straw, child. He is worth nothing."

He rose from his chair, and walked about

the room, beating his hands together. All his consequence vanished, and he now seemed to become suddenly thin.

"I have no money, Molly."

"But I thought——"

"Yes, yes, I know. Why did I retire from the City, the only place where a man can find true happiness? Why did I come to this miserable village? Child, because I had no choice—because I was a bankrupt, and my creditors, after they had taken all I had, suffered me to withdraw unmolested. So I came here, and—Molly—'tis hard for a man, who has been Alderman and Warden of his Company, and lived respected, to go among other men and own that he was bankrupt—bankrupt."

"Oh, sir!" I cried, "forgive me for ignorantly opening up the past. I could not know——"

"Say no more, Molly, say no more. Let us consider. There is a little purse; let us hope it may be enough. Perhaps our friends may not learn the truth, if this will serve till next year." He opened his desk, and took out a purse containing fifty sovereigns. "If this will serve, Molly. It is not my money, but your own, saved by me."

You now understand how I was dragged out of my trouble by necessity. We had fifty pounds for all our stock; we had to make it serve for six months and more, supposing that we did no trade for that time. But the potatoes and the cauliflower turned out well, and in the end we pulled through, though with desperate shifts at home, so that no one suspected of the Alderman that he was not, as he always pretended, a substantial merchant.

I then discovered, having my eyes opened again, as I said, by necessity, that the two ladies at the Cottage were threatened with straits as dreadful as our own, or more, because, with a great garden and no rent to pay, it goes hard if one cannot live; but these two ladies had nothing at all, except the mere hollow trunk of thin gold, from which the jewels of the Rose had all been taken. And now they must sell even that.

"My dear," said Madam, "since it hath pleased Heaven to call away our boy, for whom we broke up this Holy Relic, the possession of which, we were taught to believe, secured the continuation of our house, I see no reason why the gold should not follow the jewels, and all be sold. When we have spent that money there

will be nothing. But we are in hands which never fail."

"Oh, Madam!" I cried, "you and the Countess shall come and live with us. We will all live together, and talk about Raymond every day."

They did come to live with us, but, as you shall see, under happier conditions than we looked for.

The Vicar took away the Rose, and brought them money for it. Never was any man more taken with a work of art than the Vicar with the Rose. He loved to look upon it; he would make it the text for a discourse upon the Popes of Avignon; upon the early Protestants of Provence; upon the arts of the Middle Ages, and upon a thousand things. Yet, when he took it away, wrapped in flannel, he showed no sign of grief, but rather of satisfaction, a thing difficult to understand.

When it was gone, one felt as if the blessing of the Pope had departed from the place; strange, that we, who are Protestants, and should not value the Pope's blessing a farthing, should believe in a superstition which associated the extinction of the house with the loss of the Rose. Yet Raymond was dead, and the Holy Rose was gone. That could not be denied. And Raymond was the last of the Arnaults.

There are many strange and surprising things in this story. It is wonderful to remember how, in the wisdom of Providence, the son of the man Leroy, ignorant of his father's crime, should have been brought to the village where his father's victims lived; it is wonderful to think that his life was saved by none other than the sister of the man whom his father had murdered; that he should become a friend of that man's son; and that he should discover the truth in so sudden and unexpected a manner, on the very eve of his departure.

Remember next how Pierre prayed that we would not tell Raymond, and how, through that very ignorance, Raymond was brought mysteriously to the house of his father's murderer, and received his hospitality; how he was lured on by him in apparent security to encounter the most dreadful risk; and how the same man, who denounced the father, also bore false witness against the son. Who that considers can doubt the Providential guidance of these things?

For my own part, I remember also the

dream which Raymond had in the tower of the Château; and I see in all these things together, and in those which followed, the vengeance of God.

The world is, however, full of those who scoff at such interpretations, and foolishly boast that they believe no more than they can see. Well, for my own part, I believe not only in what I see, but also in the things which even a woman's mind may gather and conclude, from the things seen, concerning things unseen.

For instance, was it for nothing that all this time the poor mad woman talked and laughed, always happy, always with smiles and songs, with her dead husband? She knew in a dim and uncertain way, that Raymond was gone away. She even knew that he was gone to Aix, to Eyragues, and to Toulon. She talked about him at those places, wondering what he was doing, and so forth. From her husband's replies she learned that all was well with her son—which we knew, alas! was not true; but one may surely deceive a mother on this point—and that he would return home safe and well. How could he return home who was lying dead somewhere among the graves of the criminals? Well, I am now going to tell you exactly what did come to pass, and show what little faith we possessed, who knew that the dead Count was always with his wife day and night, yet could not be brought to believe his most solemn and repeated assurances.

CHAPTER XIV. THE RELEASE.

RAYMOND sat in his cell, saved from the yelling mob, which wanted to have him delivered into their hands. Why, he thought, had his guards been overpowered it would have been all over, and quickly. Now, those execrations and those furious yells would have to be faced again.

It was six o'clock when they brought him back. The Governor of the prison followed him into his cell.

"I have to inform you," he said coldly, "that your sentence is to be carried into effect without delay. You will be executed to-morrow morning, at daybreak. Expect no commutation of the sentence."

Raymond bowed.

"If there is any request you have to make, you can do so now."

"I should like to send a letter of farewell to—to a certain English girl whom I was to have married."

"You can write the letter. Confine yourself solely to the facts, and to a brief farewell. It will be read, and, if it contains nothing treasonable, it will be forwarded. Have you any other request to make?"

"I should like," said Raymond, "if this request can be granted, my sketch of the Château d'Eyragues to be enclosed in the letter."

"If it is not a drawing of a place of arms, and conveys no information, it shall be enclosed in your letter."

"I thank you, M. le Directeur. There is no other request that I have to make."

"Will you see a priest?—no? It is sometimes the case that a condemned criminal likes to make a confession or statement. You shall have a candle to enable you to do so, if you wish."

"I have nothing more to add," said Raymond, "to the statement I made in Court."

The Governor left him, and they presently sent the writing materials; the turnkey standing over Raymond while he wrote the letter, which you have already seen. The letter must have been despatched that very evening, otherwise, as you will discover immediately, it would not have been sent at all.

His dinner, or supper, was brought to him at seven o'clock. It was a sumptuous meal for a prison, consisting of soup, a roast chicken, and a bottle of good wine. But it was to be his last, and people are naturally kind to a man who is about to die.

His last! Astonishing to relate, he devoured it with great appetite and heartiness, as if it was to be succeeded by thousands. When he had finished it, he endeavoured to compose his mind to the meditation and prayer in which he intended to pass the night.

"Either," he says now, "I am naturally insensible to religion, which I am loth to believe—indeed, I am sure I am not so cold a wretch—or I was sustained by some inward assurance, because, though my end was so imminent that every minute seemed to bring me closer to the axe, I could not so clearly face the situation as to question my conscience and confess my sins before Heaven; but continually my thoughts turned towards you, my dear, and my mother, and this quiet village. Nay, though I knew that my dinner would be the last I should ever take, I devoured it with appetite, and only wished there had

been twice as much. In vain I said to myself that in twelve hours or so I should be in the presence of my Judge, and my body would be lying a senseless, headless log; my thoughts were turned earthwards, and wholly directed to thee, my sweet-heart."

I do not blame him in this; nor do I think that he was insensible to religion; because I am well assured that, as he was sustained at the trial, and as he heard the execrations of the people without alarm, so he was now miraculously kept from the despair which would otherwise have laid hold upon his soul.

Surely, a more solemn time there can never be in a man's life than the last night of it; especially if he knows that he is to die the next day, and if he be in such a condition of mental strength as to understand it. There are so many wretched criminals hanged every year that we think nothing of the anguish, the terror, the remorse of their last night upon the earth. Of some, I know, it is reported that they drink away their terrors, and go to the fatal tree stupid with liquor; and of others, that they sleep through the whole night, apparently careless of their coming end.

It was about ten o'clock that Raymond was interrupted by footsteps outside his door, and the turning of the key in the lock.

He started to his feet. Was he—the thought made his heart stand still—to be taken out in the night and thrown to the mob?

"I thank you, M. le Directeur"—Raymond started because he thought he knew the voice—"and I will not trouble you to wait. My orders are to put certain questions to the prisoner alone. Leave one of your men outside the cell, and he can conduct me to the door. Good night, M. le Directeur."

The door was thrown open and an officer entered, wearing a military cloak thrown over his shoulders, and covering half his face. He shut the door carefully, put the lamp he had taken from the turnkey upon the table, and threw back the cloak.

"Heavens, it is Pierre!"

"Hush!" It was none other than Pierre Gavotte, but no longer in rags. Pierre Gavotte, Lieutenant of the Fortyninth, in uniform. "Hush! There is no time to spare."

"My friend, you are come to say farewell. I did not expect to see a friendly face again before I died."

"I come with an order from the General-Commandant to put certain questions to the English spy. Well, here I am." He threw out his arms, and laughed as if he had kept an appointment to an evening's amusement.

"And your questions?"

"My first question—" he hesitated. "Raymond, do you know—have they told you—who I am?"

"Why, you are my old friend and enemy, Pierre Gavotte. Who else should you be?"

The name had escaped him at the trial; in the discovery that Leroy and the witness were the same, Raymond paid no attention to his assumed name. This was a happy accident, if anything can be called an accident in the course of this history so manifestly Providential.

He held out his hand. Pierre hesitated a moment. Then he took it. "Yes," he said. "Yes, we can shake hands now."

"It has been impossible," he explained, "for me to have access to you until now. I discovered a week ago the name of the so-called English spy, and I knew that it must be no other than you. Oh! my friend, you a spy? I have been considering and devising. Now I have completed my plan."

"Your plan?"

"Certainly; my plan. Why not? What is the good of having friends if they do nothing for you? You are to escape, Raymond."

"Escape? Why, Pierre, who is to take me through these stone walls? There is no time, either. I am to die at day-break."

"Everything is arranged if you will do exactly what I order. Will you promise that? I give you freedom, Raymond, if you will act by my orders. It is for Molly's sake," he added.

"I promise."

"Then change your clothes with me. Quick; time presses."

"Change with you? Why, what will you do? Pierre, I understand you now. You think that we are so much alike that I have only to walk out in your uniform, and I shall pass for you."

"That is, my friend, exactly my plan. That is, you have guessed a part of it. But as you would infallibly be found out if you went on parade, that is not all my plan."

"And what about yourself?"

Pierre laughed. "I had to make two plans; one for you, and one for me. What

do I do, when you are gone? My man outside—whom I have bribed—returns for me, and lets me out by the Governor's private entrance when he is asleep. I go home to my barracks quietly. No one will ever suspect me, and presently I get a letter from you telling me that you have arrived in safety."

All this was pure fiction.

"Are you quite sure, Pierre, that you are safe?"

"My dear friend," he replied earnestly, "I am as sure of my future as I am of your escape, if you will do exactly as I order you. There can be no doubt whatever of my future." Again he laughed, and looked so careless and light-hearted that one could not choose but believe him.

"A Field-Marshal's bâton—or——"

"That, or the other fate common to soldiers," said Pierre. "Quick, now; undress and change. Think of Molly, not of my future."

"You are now complete," he said, five minutes afterwards. "Upon my word, Raymond, you make a pretty lieutenant. But stand upright; swing your shoulders. You civilians never understand a military walk; clank your heels, rattle your sword, look at the turnkeys at the gate as an officer looks at his men, without fear and with authority; but keep your face in shade. When you leave the cell, follow the turnkey without a word. Do you understand so far?"

"Yes; so far."

"Very well. Outside the prison is a sentry who will call for the word. It is 'Espion Anglais.' Turn to the right, and walk straight along the street until you come to a little wine-shop with the sign of the 'Bleating Lamb.' Enter this shop, and without saying a word walk through it and up the stairs to the room above. Do you understand all this?"

"Perfectly. Shall I wait there for you?"

"No. You will there find a young lady. You will obey her. Now, my friend, farewell."

"We shall meet again."

"Perhaps. I do not know. Farewell. If—say rather, when you get home in safety, give this note to Miss Molly, and"—he pulled off the gold lace knot that hung from his sword-handle—"give her this as well. Tell her it is the badge of my honour that I give her. She will explain what that means. Now, farewell, Raymond."

"Farewell, Pierre." They clasped hands for the last time, and looked each into the other's face. At the last moment a doubt crossed Raymond's mind. "You are quite sure—perfectly sure, Pierre, that you are in no danger whatever?"

"Perfectly sure," he replied; "I know perfectly well where I shall be to-morrow morning. There is a thing concerning myself that Molly knows, and Madam Claire. When you get home, ask them to tell you. I shall not mind your knowing it then. Forgive me, friend; it is the only secret that I have kept from you, and even this I only discovered the day before I came away from Porchester. Go now."

He kissed him, French fashion, on both cheeks.

It all happened exactly as Pierre had arranged. The turnkeys glanced a moment at the officer, and let him out. The sentry demanded the word and suffered him to pass. He was a free man once more. In the Place d'Armes, through which his way led, stood the guillotine, tall and slender, which was set up to take off his head; the workmen were still engaged upon the scaffold. Presently he came to the wine-shop with the sign of the "Bleating Lamb," its doors open. Raymond walked through it unchallenged and up the stairs, all this exactly in accordance with his instructions.

When I received Pierre's letter he had been dead for nearly six months, so long did it take Raymond to effect his escape from the country.

"I promised," he said, "to write to you if ever I had the chance of doing something worthy. The chance has come, but not in the way you thought and I hoped. I have set Raymond free. The guilt of my father is atoned, and the life of your lover is saved for you. What more could I desire or expect? Let Madam Claire know that I was not ungrateful or forgetful. If, as she thinks, there is another life beyond the grave—my grave will be among the criminals and the outcasts—perhaps the sin of my father will not follow me there. Farewell, and be happy."

"So, Monsieur"—this was the young lady who was to meet Raymond—"I have expected you for two hours. Dieu! you are exactly like Pierre Gavotte. Are you brothers, by accident? Strange accidents happen off the stage as well as upon it. Well, I promised that I would ask no

questions, but you must do exactly what I order you. Very well, then. Oh, I know who you are, because I was in the Court to-day and saw the trial! What? You are no more a spy than I am, and you would have been acquitted but for the news of the war, which turned their heads. You played with great dignity the part of hero in the last act but one. Believe me, sir, it is only gentlemen who preserve their dignity at such moments. I understand good playing. You looked as if you were so strong in your innocence that you would not show any anxiety or irritation, even when the procureur was thundering for justice." She rattled on without pause or stop, being a pretty little black-eyed girl, well formed but slender. "Understand, then, Monsieur, that I am an actress. We trust our lives to each other—I to you, because this is a job which the First Consul would regard with severe displeasure. But you are innocent: first, because you look so; next, because you say so; and, lastly, because Pierre Gavotte—who is the soul of honour—says so. Therefore, I am pleased to protect innocence. On the stage I am frequently innocent myself, and, therefore, I know what it is to want protection. Now, listen and obey. In the next room you will find the dress of a laquais. Go and put it on. First, however"—she took a pair of scissors and cut off his hair, which was tied behind, and cropped the rest so as to hang over his ears, as is the way with the common folk—"There—now change your dress. You are a Provençal; you speak French badly; with me you talk in your own language; you are a little lame—let me see you walk—no, this is the way that lame men walk. You are also a little deaf, and you put up your hand to your ear, like this—turn your head a little, and open your mouth, and say 'Hein!' So; you are an apt pupil. Remember to be respectful to your mistress, who will sometimes scold you; above all, study the manners of servants. We are to start to-morrow for Marseilles; you will, perhaps, be able to pass over to Spain, but you must not run risks. After Marseilles, I am going north to Burgundy, where we shall be near the frontier, and you may get across in safety."

"I understand everything."

"As for your papers, I have them. They will be found perfectly regular. Al this, Monsieur, I do for you at the request of Lieutenant Gavotte, who is, it seems, your

friend. I hope that no suspicion will fall upon him."

"He declares that he is in no danger whatever," said Raymond.

"He is not my lover. Do not think that. All other men make love to me if they can; but Pierre does better. He has protected me from those who delight to insult an actress. If we were found out, Monsieur my servant who is lame and deaf, remember we should all three have an opportunity of looking into the basket which Madame la Guillotine keeps for her friends."

"I assure you, Mademoiselle, that when I left Pierre he was laughing at the danger."

"That is bad," she said, shaking her head. "Men must not laugh when they go into danger. It brings bad luck."

The occupant of the condemned cell remained undisturbed; nor did the turnkey come to let him out by the Governor's private entrance. He was left there all night long.

Very early in the morning, before day-break, he was aroused by two of the gaolers. They brought candles, and informed him that in two hours he would be executed; the time being fixed early to avoid a conflict with the crowd, who would certainly attempt to tear him in pieces.

They asked him if he wanted anything; he might have coffee if he chose, or brandy, or tobacco.

The prisoner wanted nothing except a cup of coffee, which they brought him. Shortly before six o'clock they came again, and led him to the room where criminals are prepared for the scaffold, their hands tied behind them, and their hair cut.

Then a very unexpected thing happened. The prisoner remarked, when they began to tie his hands:

"Monsieur le Directeur, these ceremonies are useless. The execution will not take place this morning."

The Governor made no reply, and they went on with the toilette.

"The execution, I repeat, Monsieur le Directeur, cannot take place."

"Why not?"

"Because the prisoner has escaped!"

"Escaped? The prisoner has escaped? Then who are you?"

"The prisoner has escaped, I repeat. He is now, if he is prudent, concealed so securely that you will not be able to find him, though you search every house in

France. As for me, you would observe, if the light was stronger, that I am not the prisoner, though I am said to resemble him. I am, on the other hand, an officer of the Forty-ninth Regiment of the Line."

"Is it possible?" cried the Governor. "An officer? What does this mean?"

"If you doubt my word, lead me to the guillotine. But if you desire to prove the truth of my words, call in any man of that regiment and ask them who I am."

"But you brought me a letter from the Commandant."

"It was a forgery. I forged the signature."

"But—how did the prisoner escape?"

"He went out of the prison dressed in my hat and cloak. I gave him, besides, the password."

"Where is he, now, then?" asked the Governor, stupidly.

"Why, if he is a wise man he will, certainly, keep that a secret."

"If the thing be as you say," said the Governor, "you have yourself, Monsieur, committed a most serious crime. What! you, an officer in the army, to release an English spy?"

"That is true. I have committed a very serious crime, indeed. It is so serious that I might just as well have suffered the execution to go on. Meanwhile, I must ask you to take me back to the cell, and to acquaint my Colonel immediately with what has happened."

There was a great crowd upon the Place d'Armes, where the guillotine was standing on a scaffold ready to embrace her victim. A military guard was stationed round the scaffold to keep off the crowd. Early as it was, the square was crowded with people, chiefly soldiers and sailors, who were in great spirits at the prospect of seeing the head taken off an English spy—an agent of perfidious Albion. They sang songs, and played rough jokes upon each other. Among them were the country people, who had brought in their fruit and vegetables for the market, and a few servants who were out thus early to see the execution as well as to do the day's marketing.

The criminal was late. The time crept along. Decidedly he was very late. Had anything happened? Were they going to pardon him at the last moment? Had he confessed his guilt and revealed the whole of the English plots? Would it not be

well to storm the prison as the Bastille had been stormed, and to seize the spy whether he had confessed or not?

Presently, men came and began to take down the scaffold, and it was understood that there would be no execution that day, because the prisoner had escaped.

The town was searched; house by house, room by room. At the gates no one in the least corresponding to him had passed. The prisoner must be somewhere in the town. Good. When found he should be torn to pieces by the people. But he was not found.

Three days afterwards, however, there was a most exciting spectacle in the Place d'Armes; a sight such as had not been witnessed since December, 1793—a military execution.

Everybody now knew that Lieutenant Gavotte, of the Forty-ninth Regiment, had effected the escape of the English spy. It was whispered by those who know everything, that a great plot had been discovered in which many of the French officers themselves were implicated. None, however, except the Colonel, knew for certain why he had done this thing. In his trial he simply said that the so-called English spy was an innocent man whose story was true; that he had been kind to himself when a prisoner in England; and that, therefore, he had assisted him to escape.

His Colonel went, at the prisoner's request, to see him. I know not what passed between them, but on his return the Colonel was greatly agitated, and openly declared that no braver officer ever existed than Lieutenant Gavotte, and no better man.

They brought him out to die between six and seven in the morning. First they tore away his epaulettes, then his cuffs, and then his facings. He was no longer an officer; he was no longer a soldier. But his face showed no sense of shame or fear.

Among the spectators was a man who, to see the show, had been sitting under the tiers all night long. He was a restless man, who moved and fidgetted continually, and bit his nails; his eyes were red; he spoke to no one.

When they led out the young man he nodded his head.

"Good," he said. "First the flood, then the fire. The property is first destroyed, and then the son."

When they set Pierre in his place this man nodded his head again.

"Good," he said. "On that spot died the Count."

They offered to tie a handkerchief round the prisoner's eyes, but he refused, and stood with folded arms.

"Good," said the spectator again. "Thus the Count refused to be bound."

Then at the word they fired, and Pierre Gavotte fell dead.

"Thus fell the Count," said the spectator. He walked slowly from his place and stood beside the dead body. "This is mine," he said; "I am his father."

CHAPTER XV. CONCLUSION.

THERE is one more chapter to write, and my story, which I am never tired of telling, will be finished. In the years to come it will be told by my children, and by my children's children—nay, among my descendants, sure I am that my story will never be forgotten, so wonderful it is and strange.

Raymond was dead; he had been guillotined: his letter told us this: only the poor mad woman assured us (speaking through the spirit of her husband) that he was safe, and this we would not believe.

Raymond was not dead; you have heard by what a miracle he was saved; hear now how he came home to us.

It was on Christmas Eve. First, there was a great surprise for us, unexpected and astonishing. But not the greatest surprise of all.

A sad Christmas Eve. The time was between six and seven. I was sitting beside Madam Claire, on a stool before the fire. There was no candle, because these poor ladies could only afford candles when Madam Claire was working. And to-night she was doing nothing.

To Frenchwomen the feast of Christmas is not so great an occasion for festivity as that of the New Year, when they exchange presents and make merry. But Madam Claire had lived ten years with us and understood our Christmas rejoicing. Alas! there was little joy for us this year, we thought, and there would be little in the years to come.

As we sat there, in silence, my head in Madam's lap, the waits came to sing before our door, the lusty cobbler leading. They sang "When shepherds watched their flocks by night," and "Let nothing you dismay," with fiddle and harp to accompany. I believe the cobbler sang his loudest and lustiest, out of pure sym-

pathy, because he knew that we were in trouble.

"Last Christmas—" I began, but could say no more.

"Patience, child, patience!" said Madam. "The Lord knows what is best, even for two humble women. Though Raymond will never come to us, we shall go to him."

"My friend"—it was the poor, mad lady, talking to her dead husband—"it is time for Raymond to come home. I thought I heard his footsteps; we have missed our boy——"

She looked about the room, as if expecting to see him sitting among us.

"Claire, my sister, when Raymond comes we will make a feast for him. There shall be a dance and a supper for the villagers. Raymond will come home to-day. My husband! Thou art always ready to make us happy. To-day, Claire; to-day." She laughed with a gentle satisfaction. "We cannot keep the boy always at home, can we? That is impossible. But he has not forgotten his mother. He is coming home to-day—to-day!"

One should have been accustomed to such words as these, but they went to our hearts; so great was the mockery between our grief and the poor creature's happiness.

Then there came a single footstep along the road. I knew it for the Vicar's, and it stopped at the cottage door.

He came in, bearing in his arms something most carefully swathed and wrapped.

"Ladies," he bowed to all of us together, "at this time of the year it is the custom in England, as you doubtless know, to exchange with each other those good wishes of Christian folk one to other, which are based upon the Event which the Church will to-morrow commemorate. I wish for this household a merry——"

"Nay, sir," I said, "can we have merry hearts, this Christmas or any Christmas?"

"A merry Christmas," he said stoutly, "and a happy New Year. Ay, the merriest Christmas and the happiest New Year that Heaven can bestow——"

Was His Reverence in his right mind?

"It is also," he went on, "the godly custom among us to make presents one to the other, at this season, in token of our mutual affection, and in gratitude to the Giver of all good things. Therefore, Madam, I have ventured to bring with me my offering. It is this."

He placed the parcel upon the table, and began to unroll the coverings.

"What?" he looked at me with a kind of fierceness quite unusual in his character—"what! you think that I could look on unmoved at the afflictions of this innocent family!" (I declare that I never thought anything of the kind.) "You think that I could suffer them to break up and destroy for the sake of a few miserable guineas, so priceless a relic as the Golden Rose, given to this family five hundred years ago? Never. Learn, Madam," he bowed again to Madam Claire, "that I have been the holder, not the buyer or the seller, of the jewels belonging to this precious monument of ancient (though mistaken and corrupt) religion. I have now replaced every stone in its proper setting—you will not find one missing—and I give you back complete, just as when it was hallowed by the Pope at Avignon, your Holy Rose."

He threw off the coverings, and behold it—the gems sparkling and the gold branches glowing in the firelight; every jewel replaced, and the Rose as complete as ever; and most beautiful it looked, with its flowers all of precious stones.

"Pardon me," he said; "the deception which I have practised. I was determined to save the Rose, and, without my little falsehood (which may Heaven forgive!) you would not have taken the money."

"We must bring out the Holy Rose because Raymond comes home to-day," said the mad lady.

"Sir," cried Madam Claire. "Oh, Sir, this is too much." She burst into sobbing and weeping and fell upon her knees at the table, throwing her arms round the Rose. I never knew before how much she loved it.

"It is one thing to restore to you the Rose," said the Vicar, "it is another to give you back the dead. Heaven alone can do that. Yet there was a legend, a tradition, a superstitious belief concerning this Rose, was there not? The House should never want heirs so long as the Rose remained in its possession. Why, it has never left your hands except to be, as we may say, repaired."

"Alas!" said Madam, "the tradition has proved false. It was, I fear, a human and earthly tradition, not warranted by the blessing of the Pope, which must have been intended for some other than the lady to whom he made the gift."

"Perhaps. Yet sometimes—nay. I know not—"

Here he hesitated, and looked from Madam to me, and from me to Madam as one who has something to communicate, but doubts how to say it or what he should say. What could he have to say?

"Poor Molly!" he said at length, laying his hand upon my head. "Poor child! thou hast had a grievous time of trial. Hast thou faith enough to believe that there may still be happiness in store for thee?"

I shook my head. There was no more happiness possible for me.

"Strange!" he said, still with that hesitation. "Twas an old legend, it seems a foolish legend. How can the blessing of a mere man have such merit? We may not believe it. Yet—Sometimes we are deceived, and idle words prove true. It hath happened that things which seemed impossible have happened. Wherefore, Molly, let us hope—let us hope. But why connect such things as may happen with the Pope?"

I think we ought to have guessed something at these words. But Raymond was dead. We cannot expect the dead to be raised to life. And, besides, I was thinking of Madam, who was weeping, and praying, and praising God upon her knees; being carried quite out of herself, as I had never seen her before, except when she spoke like a prophetess to Pierre.

"Molly," said the Vicar, "the ways of Providence are wonderful; we cannot try to fathom them. If sorrow falls upon us, we must learn to be resigned; if joy comes, we must be grateful. My dear, how shall I tell thee what has happened?"

"Is it some new misfortune?" I asked. "Has my father—"

"Nay, it is no misfortune. And yet thou must summon up all thy courage to hear the news which came to me this afternoon. Listen, then; and if I do not tell thee all at once, it is because I fear for thy reason. Thy father, child, knows the news, and he is already—but I anticipate. Sally knows, and she comes with him in a few minutes. But I must speak slowly. Her father knows, because he brought him in the boat. But I am going too quickly."

"Who has come in the boat—my father?"

"No, Molly, no; not thy father. I fear, child, that I have broken the news too abruptly—let me begin again. If, I say, resignation is the duty of the sorrowful, a grateful heart, which is also the duty of the joyful, must be shown in a spirit that

is tranquil and self-contained. Be tranquil and self-contained; and now, my dear, I have this day received a letter—this afternoon only—followed by the boat from the harbour with—with—the potatoes and onions and—and—the woman whom they call Porchester Sal——”

Was the Vicar going off his head? What could he mean?

He was not, however, permitted to prepare my mind any more, for at that moment a man came running down the road, and the door burst open.

It was my cousin Tom.

“I hear the footstep of my boy,” said the Countess.

“Molly!” he cried. “A Ghost! A Ghost! I have seen a Ghost!”

His wild eyes and pale cheeks showed at least that he was horribly frightened. His hat had fallen off, and the whip which he generally carried had been dropped somewhere in the road.

“Molly! A real Ghost. When I saw him I said: ‘Who’s afraid of a Ghost?’ That’s what I said. ‘Who’s afraid of a Ghost? You’d like to kick me again, would you?’ And with that I gave him one with my whip. Would you believe it? My whip was knocked out of my hand, and I got a one-two with his fists—Well, any man may be afraid of a Ghost, and I ran away.”

“A Ghost, Tom?”

“Molly, you remember that story about the fight and the kick in the face, don’t you? I used to say that I had him

down and was laying on with a will. That wasn’t true, Molly. I daresay I should have had him down in another round—no—no—he will haunt me—it wasn’t true at all. I never had him down, and he would never have gone down, because he began it; but he did kick me.”

“Tom, that was Pierre Gavotte, not Raymond at all.”

“Ah! all of a tale; stick to it. Oh! Lord—here he is again!”

Sally rushed in before him.

“Miss Molly! Miss Molly! I brought him up the harbour in the boat. We picked him up at Point. Here he is! Here he is! Not a bit of a Frenchman, though he is dressed in a blue sack and a cloth cap. Oh! here he is!”

Oh! Heavens; can I ever forget that moment? ’Twas Raymond himself. Raymond, strong and well, his arms stretched out for me. When he let me go, I saw that the Vicar and my father were shaking hands, and the tears were in their eyes. But Madam Claire was still on her knees, her head in her hands. And so we stood in silence until she rose and solemnly kissed her nephew.

“My friend,” said Raymond’s mother to her husband, “I knew that your words come always true. You said that Raymond would come home to-day. We will have a feast to welcome the boy’s return. And the villagers shall dance.”

“It is,” said Madam Claire, “the Blessing of the Holy Rose.”

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CUPID'S COUNTRY-DANCE.

By C. L. PIRKIS.

And folks, who ne'er have danced before,
Can dance in Cupid's Alley.

AUSTIN DOBSON.

FIGURE ONE.

LEADING COUPLES ADVANCE.

"It's annoying—very. Difficult to understand—rather," said Sir Peter Witney. Here he shuffled together a small packet of letters that the morning's post had brought him, every one of which contained a refusal of his polite invitation to spend a week or ten days at Witney Hall. "But, after all," he added after a moment's pause, "it's their loss, not mine. Don't you agree with me, Miss Miles?"

Three days previously, when Sir Peter was sending out his invitations, this lady had had a somewhat different remark addressed to her. Then it had been: "It's a happy thought of mine to give my house-warming at Easter, when everybody's glad to run away for a few days into the country. Don't you agree with me, Miss Miles?"

To which question Miss Miles had replied then, as now: "Exactly, Sir Peter; I was just going to make the same remark."

For the past fifteen years of her life, during which period she had filled the double capacity of lady-housekeeper to Sir Peter and governess to his orphan ward, one-half of this worthy lady's duties had

consisted in repeating this formula at least a dozen times in as many hours.

"Their loss, not mine!" Sir Peter went on irritably, evidently bent on working himself into what Miss Miles was accustomed to call "a state of mind." "Now I should like to know who, of all those people who have seen fit to refuse my invitation, keeps a better stud than I do, or has a better cook in his kitchen, or can put better wine on his table—eh, Miss Miles?"

"Ah, I should like to know, indeed."

"Or who among them could put his hand in his pocket and pay thirty thousand pounds down on the nail for a country house, then pull it down and rebuild it from top to bottom? Eh, Miss Miles?"

"Or furnish it when it was rebuilt; that means another thirty thousand pounds, pictures included, eh, Sir Peter?"

Sir Peter was mollified. His house was his pride and his hobby. To build it, to furnish it, and to lay out its spacious grounds to the best advantage, had taken every spare minute of his time since, five years previously, rejoicing in his civic baronetcy, he had sold his City business and settled down as a country gentleman in the green plains of Buckinghamshire.

"A famous hunting country—I shall be able to give you a capital mount whenever you like to run down," he had said to his City friends, when he had purchased his estate. They were friends, by the way, as little likely to mount a hunter and follow the hounds as Sir Peter himself. If it had not been for Sir Peter's only son, Leo,

and his friends, the hunters would speedily have fallen victims to apoplexy.

Leo was a genial, good-hearted young fellow. He had been to Harrow and Oxford, and drew friends around him by the score. As he drove them home from the station in his dog-cart, he was in the habit of admonishing them somewhat in this fashion:

"Now, if you want to get into the governor's good graces, just address him as 'Sir Peter,' as often as you can get the name in. Also don't fail to ask him how much he gave for his house, and what it costs to keep the stables going. And be sure to speak of me at least once a day as his successor to the title—that shows, do you see, we're none of your paltry City knights—and the governor will decide you're one of the best of fellows going."

But Sir Peter's ambition flew higher than Leo's friends, and aimed at filling his house with Leo's friends' fathers, and mothers, and uncles, and aunts. They were not so easy to get at, however, and in response to Sir Peter's invitation, written in Miss Miles's best hand, there had come a succession of refusals. "Thanks—regrets—previous engagements."

"We'll not discuss—a—these letters at lunch, Miss Miles," Sir Peter went on to say, as he carefully tore them into small morsels before committing them to the waste-paper basket. "Leo has an unfortunate habit—you may have noticed it—of passing blunt remarks upon my friends which I do not approve of, before the servants." Which remark, it may be noted, was Sir Peter's manner of expressing the fact that Leo had an unfortunate habit of seeing the ridiculous side of things, and that, no doubt, he would not neglect the opportunity of making capital out of twenty-two refusals arriving by the morning's post.

"Ah, Leo was always a spoilt boy," said Miss Miles deprecatingly.

"Sometimes I think it would be as well that he and Fan should marry and settle down without farther delay," the old gentleman said musingly. Which remark, it may also be noted, was Sir Peter's method of expressing the fact that sometimes Leo's fun was a little too much for him.

Miss Miles was thoroughly of Sir Peter's opinion long before luncheon was over that day. The meal began badly. Leo settled himself comfortably at table between pretty Fan and stout Miss Miles, with her nondescript features, neat grey hair, stiff silk gown, and fluttering lace lappets.

"Let me see," he began, looking up and down the length of the table, "we shall want at least three yards more of mahogany let in here next week, when our numerous and distinguished friends begin to arrive. Or will you have the table turned into a T, father, and let Royalty, as represented by the Lord Lieutenants and Justices of the Peace who are coming, sit with you at the upper end?"

Sir Peter was seized with a sudden fit of coughing, and grew very red in the face.

"It's the curry. Cook must have put in whole pepper instead of cayenne," suggested Miss Miles apologetically.

Leo turned to the butler:

"Saunders, take a message from me to the cook. Say that next week, when the Lord Lieutenants and the Justices of the Peace sit down to our table, whole pepper is on no account to be put into the curry instead of cayenne. Don't, Miss Miles, my feet are tender. You must have double-soled boots on."

This, in acknowledgement of Miss Miles's unseen though vigorous efforts to put him to silence.

"They're not coming," roared Sir Peter at him between his fits of coughing.

"Never mind, the message can go down," continued Leo calmly. "We shall have a trio of General Officers and a brace of Colonels at least, and they're uncommonly particular about their curries—especially when they get upon the Retired List. Ah, take care, that'll go the wrong way." This was addressed to Sir Peter, who suddenly seemed seized with a fit of thirst, and was taking long and frequent draughts from his glass of claret.

Sir Peter cleared his throat loudly once or twice.

"I should condemn that claret—it's acid—before the distinguished on the Retired List arrive. They're just as particular about their claret as they are about their curries," Leo began.

"They're not coming," again roared Sir Peter at him, and then he set off coughing again.

"I knew it would go the wrong way," Leo went on calmly as before. "Don't try to frown at me in that threatening manner, Fan. A frown isn't your style at all. You can no more frown than you can flirt."

Now to tell a pretty, blue-eyed, golden-haired damsel that a frown sits awry on her face is no insult. But to imply that flirtation would come equally amiss to her, is to cast a slur either upon her capabilities

or upon the use she has made of her opportunities for distinguishing herself.

Fan gave a quick upward look into Leo's face, which said as plainly as words could say it: "Give me the chance, and—you'll see."

But her lips said nothing. Sir Peter was at that moment to have his innings. The afternoon post, just then brought in by Saunders, among other missives brought one with a crest—a stag's head surmounted by a coronet. Sir Peter pounced upon this letter at once, read it through at first hurriedly, expecting that "compliments" and "regrets" would, as before, greet his eye; complacently a second time, when he found that two out of his many invited guests had accepted his invitation; and triumphantly the third time, when he felt that Leo's eyes, Fan's eyes, Miss Miles's eyes were turned expectantly in his direction.

He cleared his throat.

"The Earl of Exmoor and his daughter, the Lady Joan——" he began pompously.

"Good goodness, where are we going now?" Leo ejaculated.

"Have much pleasure in accepting my polite invitation for Easter week."

"Is that the Temperance Earl, who conducts the Bands of Hope about the kingdom, and has started a League for boycotting public-houses?" asked Leo. "Saunders," he called after the retreating figure of the butler, "when the Earl sits down to our table next week, take care that a decanter of toast-and-water is always at his Earlship's elbow, and on no account offer him either sherry or champagne."

"There's my peacock come for his dinner," said Fan, jumping up from the table, and taking with her a plate of fruit and bread-crumbs to the long French window, where stood the brilliant bird pecking at the glass.

Leo followed her.

"Fan," he whispered, as in turns he helped her feed or tease her pet, "when we two are married we won't live in a big, staring new house like this"—here he glanced somewhat contemptuously at the sumptuous furniture and decorations of the spacious dining-room—"but we'll just creep into a comfortable little cottage. Ten rooms and good stabling is all we can possibly want."

And Fan demurely assented that "ten rooms and good stabling" were all that they could possibly want.

At the self-same moment Sir Peter and Miss Miles, still seated at table, were discussing the same event. The father's eye

followed the son and intended daughter-in-law with not a little pride. Leo was not a son to be ashamed of. It was matter for congratulation that Sir Peter had not transmitted to him his own short, thick-set figure, small eyes and nose. Leo, no doubt, got his height, his curly chestnut hair, and dark expressive eyes, from that girl-mother who, five-and-twenty years ago, had been laid in her grave. A little sadness shadowed the father's look of pride as he turned to Miss Miles and said:

"When Leo and Fan are married, the house will seem very dull and quiet."

"Exactly, Sir Peter; I was just about to make the same remark."

"Leo has told me right out that he means to have a separate establishment. Well, it's no use fighting against the inevitable. The better plan is to look it fairly in the face, and see what one can do for the best."

Miss Miles looked up at him enquiringly. His tone of voice seemed to imply that he was leading up to something that had to be said. Now Miss Miles had her own idea as to what ought to happen when Leo and Fan were married. Could it by any possibility coincide with Sir Peter's at the present moment? Her heart went fluttering.

Sir Peter's next words made it flutter faster.

"Now many men in my position, dreading a lonely life, would make fools of themselves and marry the first young girl they could get to have them; but I'm not likely to do that, eh, Miss Miles?"

Miss Miles felt all her colour go into her face. The table was a long one; she was seated half-way down, so she raised her voice to answer.

"At your time of life! I should think not, indeed, Sir Peter."

Sir Peter drew himself up with dignity.

"At my time of life! I'm not an infirm old man. I hope—only just the other side of sixty! Do you mean to say you think I'm too far on in life to marry again, eh, Miss Miles?"

"I? Good gracious, no!" cried Miss Miles energetically. "You are younger than many men are at fifty. Why, I've known men at eight-and forty look older than you. Try some of this jelly, Sir Peter. You've only made half a lunch, what with Leo's fun and the letters coming in."

Here Miss Miles took possession of the jelly dish, left her place at the table, and, seated in Fan's vacant chair, proceeded to help Sir Peter.

Fan looked mischievously over her shoulder at the two.

"I believe she's making love to him," she whispered to Leo.

"Let's leave her to it," whispered Leo back. "Poor old dear! she has warmed his slippers and laughed at his jokes for the past fifteen years; I don't see why she shouldn't do it for another fifteen years if she's so disposed. Come out for a drive, Fan; it's a heavenly day." So the two left the room together.

"As I was saying," Sir Peter went on between his morsels of jelly, "I'm not likely to make a fool of myself by marrying a miss in her teens."

"They are so flighty—think only of dress, and flirtation, and dancing."

"Well, it isn't so much what they do think of, that I find fault with, as what they do not. Now a man at my time of life likes to have his tastes and likings considered in his meals—"

"Ah, many a good night's rest it has cost me thinking of what I should order for the next day's luncheon or dinner," put in Miss Miles softly.

"Exactly; but one would hardly expect a girl, say of seventeen, to lose a night's rest with thinking over the next day's dinner. But, you see, when they're turned—"

"Forty-five!" put in Miss Miles. She had stopped at forty-five five years ago.

"Well, I don't think they need be quite so far on as that."

"Ah, he thinks I'm younger. I'll be forty-two next time he asks my age," thought Miss Miles.

"But, after all," Sir Peter went on, "it's a question of character as much as age. Now a woman of a kind, affectionate disposition, with—"

"A talent for housekeeping," suggested Miss Miles.

"Exactly; and an even temper, may make every whit as good a wife at thirty years of age as another at forty without those desirable qualities. No more jelly, thank you, Miss Miles. Now, will you be kind enough to go into the library and fetch me the 'Peerage'? I've a very strong reason for wishing to find out the age of the Lady Joan."

FIGURE TWO. PAS DE COUR.

"The old order changes, the plutocracy is paramount; we must bend to the new order of things," the Earl of Exmoor had

said to his daughter when he wrote his acceptance of Sir Peter's invitation. "This man holds all the mortgages of my Buckinghamshire property, and within a year he can foreclose unless I pay up arrears. It's of no use, Joan, you must give up Eckersley and all thoughts of love in a country vicarage. This Sir Peter Witney is a widower. You understand what I mean, I hope, without my having to go into details. You had better write to Eckersley; put it as kindly as you can, but make him understand that it will be better for you both that your engagement should come to an end now."

Lord Exmoor had succeeded to his title, and a heavily-encumbered estate, somewhat late in life. He was a man of great personal dignity, with manners, people said, that were not only starched but well-ironed, they were so smooth and polished in their stiffness. Years ago some one had told him he greatly resembled—making due allowance for discrepancy in years—the Emperor of Germany. Ever since then Lord Exmoor's stateliness had become more stately, his seriousness more serious, and he had gone in largely for big schemes for benefiting "the masses" by means of Temperance Leagues, tracts, and tea-parties.

Lady Joan was a dutiful daughter, with a great respect for her father's whims and wishes. But her love for her lover must have outweighed her respect for her father, for she said to herself as she gave orders for her boxes to be packed, "I won't write to Eckersley till I come back from Witney Hall, and, oh, dear! I do so wish this Sir Peter Witney were a widow instead of a widower, so that father could make him the Countess at once, and so settle his affairs for himself."

Sir Peter awaited the arrival of his distinguished guests with not a little trepidation. At first he had said to himself, after he had received the acceptance of his invitation, "Now it was a capital idea of mine to get an invitation into the Earl's hands through his lawyer's by means of mine. I'll get the notification of his visit into all the leading papers here, and then I'll like to know who will dare turn up his nose at me, and call me Old Rabbit-Skins."

But as time went on, and the day of arrival drew nearer, his courage began to ooze. "I wish I knew a little more how they carry on in aristocratic circles," he soliloquised, as he smoked his cigar over

his morning's paper. "Now Leo could give me a good many useful hints if he liked; he has stayed in ever so many good houses, and knows all the ins and outs of fashionable life. But if I ask him for a word of advice it'll just set his mischievous brain going, and he'll tell me the Earls and the Countesses go to bed in their coronets and bangles, and such like nonsense. I know I shall have to take the Lady Joan in to dinner every night—that I'm quite sure about. And I remember Alderman Bury—he has passed the chair and knows all about these things—saying that colloquially the title of Earl is dropped, and so I suppose I must address him as Lord Exmoor. Ah! and there's another thing—I remember Bury told me—that I was to be sure and receive my guests myself if they were at all distinguished. Now I've forgotten where he said I ought to stand to receive them; whether it was at the foot of the stairs, or at the head of the stairs, or at the inner hall door just behind the butler. I must think it all out and arrange the details carefully. A first impression is everything, and I wouldn't like the Lady Joan to think that one must be born with a handle to one's name to know manners."

So it came to pass that when Lord Exmoor and Lady Joan stepped from their carriage on to the door-step of Witney Hall, two "match footmen," gorgeous in bullion and crimson plush, stood one on either side of the doorway, a serious-looking man in black stood behind them, and another serious-looking man, also in black, behind him.

The first two individuals Lord Exmoor passed without a look, to the third he gave his name, at the fourth, who was occupied in making a very low bow, he stared blankly.

"Ah, a house steward, perhaps," he said to himself; "or they may have a way of keeping two butlers in these new houses, goodness only knows."

The bowing individual bowed again, backing as he went towards the door of one of the reception rooms. "Delighted to see you, my lord—Lord Exmoor," he said with every bow he made. But as his words were spoken with his face very much downwards, the Turkey rugs which covered the hall had the benefit of them, not Lord Exmoor.

"That will do, my good man," said the Earl, as Sir Peter's last bow landed the party well within the comfortable library.

"Now will you go and tell your master I am here?"

Sir Peter straightened his back, grew crimson in the face, took out his pocket-handkerchief and rubbed his forehead hard.

Lady Joan was too quick-witted not to see her father's mistake, and too kind-hearted not to try to atone for it. She threw a good deal of warmth into her greeting of Sir Peter, and began talking very fast about the pretty country road they had driven down on their way from the station.

Fan came forward to be introduced, Leo followed.

"Blunders will arise," said the Earl, as he gave two fingers to the young man. "I was mistaken once for a man very much my inferior in station—a commoner, in fact."

Leo put his chin on a level with the Earl's grey hair.

"Ah," he said, "a worse thing happened to me! Once I was mistaken for an aristocrat! I nearly shook the life out of the man who made the blunder."

The Earl stared at him for a moment. Then he turned to Fan, and in dignified, courtly fashion began to question her as to her pursuits and likings, and the way in which she passed her time in the country.

"The women in this class of life are generally superior to the men," he said to his daughter later on in the day, when he found himself alone with her. "That young fellow with the clownish manners will never get beyond his father's tanyard."

Dinner that night was a dreary affair. Sir Peter was very ill at ease. Dinner had been ordered "à la russe," in order to give them leisure—as Sir Peter had explained to Saunders—for conversation. Well, the leisure was there, but the conversation was not. Lady Joan was tall, pale, and slender; her neck had a peculiarly graceful bend to it; she appeared to be always leaning towards you in a listening attitude. "She looks like a snowdrop on a frosty morning," thought Leo, as he seated himself opposite to her at table. "She'd make a capital listener, if there were anything to listen to." Fan did the greater part of the talking. She came out in a manner which surprised, and did not altogether please, Leo. She chatted away to Lord Exmoor as if she had known him all her life. "It was to make up for your cross looks," she explained to Leo afterwards; "and really I do admire his quiet,

dignified way of speaking, and the courtly manner he has of showing you attention. When he picked up my fan and presented it to me, it was a positive act of adoration. He bent so low that it took him a good three minutes to get his back straight again."

"Ah, that should be laid to the account of his rheumatism, not of his politeness," said Leo ill-naturedly. And then he went off by himself to his "den," and did not go near the drawing-room that evening until five minutes before bed-time.

That five minutes was five minutes too much for him. As he entered the room his eye lighted upon Fan, seated beside Lord Exmoor on a sofa facing the door. Fan was an authority upon palmistry. She was carefully scrutinising the Earl's thin white hand, which lay between her two pretty plump ones.

"Yours is a beautiful hand," he heard Fan saying as he entered. "Your fingers are in exact proportion to your hand—neither too long nor too short. Your forefinger inclines to the left—away from your thumb—that means generosity."

"Don't forget, Fan, that spade-shaped thumbs mean villainy," said Leo as he passed. And as he said it he devoutly hoped that the Earl owned to an indubitable spade-thumb on each hand.

Then his ear caught a remnant of his father's talk. The drawing-room at Witney Hall was superb alike in its dimensions and decorations. Sir Peter, side by side with Lady Joan, was making the round of it. A stranger might have thought he was showing her the pictures. Leo knew better. "I wonder how often women wish they had the right to tell men to go to Jericho," he thought as Sir Peter's words fell upon his ear.

"This Lincrusta Walton," the old gentleman was saying, "which forms the dado of this room, cost me exactly double what it costs anybody else. It was made to my order, and has three times as much gold-leaf on it as that supplied to Royalty. And this curtain," here he picked up a corner of the satin curtain which rested on the floor, "cost every shilling of twenty-five guineas a yard, that means fourteen shillings and sevenpence an inch!"

Miss Miles, in solitary grandeur, sat in a big arm-chair beside the fire. Her hands lay in her lap, her untouched embroidery beside her. She was conjugating her pluperfect tense a little sadly, not a doubt. "I might have been, he might have been, we might have been—so happy!" Leo

could read in the lines and puckers of her forehead and mouth.

He nodded his good-night to her and vanished.

FIGURE THREE. PAS DE COQUETTE.

EASTER WEEK was a wet one that year. Now a wet week in a big country-house is a fine test of character, more especially if that country-house is but scantily supplied with guests, and those guests are but scantily supplied with amusements. People develop into the good or the evil geniuses of the community in exact proportion to their capacity for "keeping things going." Leo's talents in that respect seemed suddenly to have come to a halt; it was Fan who showed herself to be the good fairy of the family. Lord Exmoor seemed to be particularly fascinated by her pretty, demure ways and bright flow of fun. Lady Joan, to Leo's fancy, seemed to lose no opportunity of throwing the two together. Sometimes it would be, "That lovely water-colour drawing [you showed me yesterday! Will you mind my father seeing it?]" And then the Earl would spin out a succession of stately compliments to Fan over one of her sketches. Or it would be, "That sweet little song that you sang to me this morning! May I fetch my father to hear you sing it?—he adores music," and then the compliments and smiles would be exchanged over the grand piano.

Lady Joan, with thoughts still full of that cherished country vicarage—and its vicar—saw possibly a way of reconciling duty with the wishes of her heart, by a marriage between the impecunious Earl and the ward of the prosperous holder of the Buckinghamshire mortgages. "It would be every whit as good as my sacrificing myself to the rich old widower," she thought. "He will be sure to be lenient to us, no matter whether he becomes father-in-law to my father, or my father is father-in-law to him! And oh, what a load off my mind!"

It should be stated that Lady Joan, though she set to work with a will at her plots, and took care to keep her father's mind at rest by encouraging every one of Sir Peter's attentions to herself, was yet withal an innocent plotter. Of Leo and Fan's engagement to each other she knew nothing.

Leo had never yet acted the part of a jealous lover. It was quite a new experience for him to be perpetually haunted

with a desire to lock up Fan in a cupboard, or to trip up the old Earl as he came downstairs in the morning with slow and stately step.

Sir Peter only threw, as it were, a cursory glance at his aristocratic guest's flirtation with his ward.

"Of course there's nothing in it," he said to Leo—upon which Leo muttered a gruff "so much the better for him." "And," Sir Peter went on to say, "of course it's an absurd thing for a man at his time of life to be making eyes at a young girl like Fan. If he could only have seen himself last night bending over her, and turning over the leaves of her music, for all the world like a young fellow of five-and-twenty! I spoke to Fan afterwards, and asked her how she could allow him to make himself so ridiculous, and her answer was that 'she liked it.' Now, Leo, can you tell me what she meant by that? I'm quite at a loss."

Leo professed himself to be quite at a loss also.

"One thing is clear," Sir Peter went on, "the man can have no sense of humour, or he wouldn't make himself a laughing-stock in this fashion."

"Ah, if he were not so thick-skinned he would have seen the admirable manner in which you took him off last night," said Leo.

"I took him off!"

"Yes, when you crossed the room—so—on the tips of your toes, with Lady Joan's teacup in your hand, and presenting it with a low bow, assured her your Dresden felt honoured by the touch of her lips."

Here Leo reproduced Sir Peter's little pantomime of over-night.

Sir Peter grew red in the face. "Bless my soul! I did nothing of the sort. My attentions to Lady Joan, I assure you, are offered in all seriousness, and are—are quite another thing."

"Oh, no doubt. Quite another thing."

"In the first place, there's a considerable difference between my age and his."

"I should think so, indeed! Eighteen months if there's a day!"

"Eighteen months! There's a good three years' difference, at least. What do you mean by eighteen months? And, in addition, there's a considerable difference between Fan's age and Lady Joan's. I say, Leo," here the old gentleman's face grew conscious and rubicund, "what should you say to Lady Joan for a step-mother, eh?"

He enforced the question by a dig in Leo's ribs, and an odd little noise which certain jovial old gentlemen are in the habit of making when the joke they relate is a good one. It seemed entirely composed of k's, and recalled nothing so much as the subdued explosion of a cracker between the back teeth.

Leo was startled, but he did not show it. "A mother-in-law!" he repeated. "Oh, well, I suppose she's young enough. I dare say she's about two or three-and-twenty."

"Two or three-and-twenty! She's turned twenty-five! I've looked her out in the 'Peerage.' Now, don't you think it would be a capital match for me to make; wealth on my side, rank on hers; mortgages comfortably adjusted for the good of the family; the county generally making a rush at me for introductions to my wife and my wife's father! I say, Leo," here the old gentleman's voice dropped a little, "I do wish the father were a little less of an icicle, though—I can't get at him. I wish he would drop a little of his stiff, starched manners in the home circle!"

"Do you call him 'stiff starch'?"

"Well, I don't know what else to call that poker-up-the-back way he has of coming into a room and taking a chair. You haven't noticed it! My dear boy, what have you noticed, I should like to know, if you haven't noticed that?"

"The impression he gives me is that of a man who would like to be genial and free-and-easy, if you'd only let him."

"If I'd only let him!"

"Yes, I mean it. If I were a stranger in the house here—didn't know you, I mean—I should certainly say to myself, 'Now what has that poor old Earl done that Sir Peter Witney keeps him at such a distance?'"

"I keep him at a distance! Good goodness, it's he who keeps me at arm's length!"

"Ah, that's the mistake you make. Your manner to him is unlike what it is to any other of your friends. You must admit that."

"Ah, well, I suppose it is. Between ourselves, Leo, I never see him come into a room but what I get a creepy sort of feeling down my back, and want to get out of it as fast as possible."

"Exactly. Your manner shows it. Now, if instead of the uncomfortable politeness you are always showing him, you'd just behave to him as you do to Alderman

Bury or your other old friends—slap him on the back now and then and call him 'my dear fellow'—you'd put things on a different footing at once."

"Do you really think so, Leo?"

"I do indeed. Now that little dig in the ribs you gave me just now, and that little cracker-like noise between your teeth, would come in very well in one of your funny little stories, just before the joke comes in. What was that anecdote I heard you relating the other day, about the man who put the whole of a grouse on his plate at one of your civic dinners? Tell it him to-night after dinner in the drawing-room, and don't forget the dig in the ribs and the cracker between your teeth."

Sir Peter thought well over Leo's counsel, came to the conclusion that there was "something in it," and that very night, after dinner was over, he made the effort to carry it into effect. An effort? It would be more correct to say a succession of efforts, for it cost the old gentleman two or three hours' hard thinking and his appetite for his dinner before he could make up his mind how, when, and where he should fasten upon the Earl, and begin the little story of the man who helped himself to a whole grouse. Leo guessed where his father's thoughts were wandering, as he noticed him rubbing his forehead hard once or twice with his pocket-handkerchief, giving contradictory orders to the butler, and drinking—for him, that is—an extraordinary amount of champagne.

But Leo, for all his plotting, only came in for the fag-end of the fun. After dinner he went off to his "den" again, and entered the drawing-room only just in time to see his father with a very red face standing close to the Earl with a very white one, and "Good gracious, how could he!" written plainly on the faces of every one of the three ladies present.

Lord Exmoor's stature seemed slowly increasing in height at the rate of an inch a minute. He looked up at the wall high over Sir Peter's head, slightly, very slightly, shrugged his shoulders, turned on his heel, and walked away.

"It is what one might expect in these houses," was his mental comment on Sir Peter's story of the man who helped himself to the whole grouse.

Fan, no doubt by way of making amends for Sir Peter's undue familiarity, came forward. "Will you like me to sing that little ballad I sang to you last night?" she asked, looking up very sweetly into his

face; and the Earl thawed into a deferential courtesy at once.

Sir Peter walked away in the other direction, his face getting redder and redder.

"I've done it, Leo," he whispered, "just as you told me; and—and—I don't think he liked it."

"Nonsense," said Leo, "that's his way of listening. Try again. Tell him a better story next time, with a little more action."

Fan finished her song, and looked up again in Lord Exmoor's face.

"I'm sure you could sing if you liked," she said. "Now confess. I've ever so many songs that would suit a man's voice: 'Juanita,' 'Sweethearts,' 'Never to know!'"

The Earl smiled and shook his head.

"I never sang a song in my life. Once I used to play the guitar. That was years ago when I was living in Seville. Ah, I can remember—no, I don't think I will tell you what I used to do in the hot summer nights at Seville."

"I know," cried Fan; "you used to serenade the ladies under their windows. Oh, how lovely to be woke up with music on a hot summer's night! I have a guitar; see if you can remember one of your old serenades on it! Oh, Leo, do get my guitar for me. I left it on the window-seat in the hall."

"Couldn't possibly, Fan. I'm just going to hold this skein of silk for Miss Miles," said Leo, going down on his knees and picking up that lady's embroidery basket, much to her astonishment.

So Fan had to ring for her guitar, and while it was being fetched, kept repeating, over and over again, "How lovely it would be to be serenaded on a hot summer's night!"

"I did a little in that way once," said Sir Peter to Lady Joan rather shyly. "I remember, when I was about twenty years of age, falling desperately in love with a young lady at one of the big boarding-schools a little outside the town where I lived. She dared me to come and serenade her on her birthday night. I did it—climbed over the garden-wall, and sang 'The Maid of Lodi' under the window she had told me was hers. But it was her governess's! I shall never forget my feelings when the window opened, and the elderly spinster put her head out and told me to be off or she'd send for the police."

Fan twanged at the guitar-strings and held it out to the Earl.

He shook his head.

"No, I wouldn't make myself ridiculous by playing out of tune."

Lady Joan looked up sweetly at Sir Peter.

"Don't you think you could remember a verse or two of 'The Maid of Lodi' if you tried. I know the air; I could play your accompaniment."

"Well, I don't mind trying," said Sir Peter, clearing his throat and going to the piano.

Evidently he did not mind, for he sang the whole song from beginning to end, and would have complied with an encore had one been given him.

And after that, Lord Exmoor threw Fan into raptures with a serenade from "Don Pasquale" on the guitar.

"Well, this beats all," thought Leo; "I'll take it out of those two old gentlemen properly by-and-by." Then aloud to Miss Miles he said: "Miss Miles, why should you and I be left out of all the fun in this fashion? If you'll allow me I'll hold every one of your skeins of silk in succession—I believe there are about six-and-thirty at the bottom of your basket. No, thank you, I won't sit down, I'll kneel here—my proper place—on the carpet at your feet."

And he made such desperate love to her for the rest of the evening, that the worthy lady did not know whether to feel flattered or affronted.

That night, when Lord Exmoor retired to his room, he found a dainty little missive, in pretty, feminine writing, pinned on his toilet-cushion. With not a little curiosity he opened it, and read as follows:

"Your lovely music is in my ears still. Ah, those fortunate ladies at Seville! What would I not give to be awakened by melody between two and three in the morning! My guitar lies upon the grand piano; my room is exactly over the drawing-room on the north side of the house. The shutters of the drawing-room are but lightly barred, and there are no bells attached."

"F."

Sir Peter also, that night, as he kicked off his boots beside his bedroom fire, had his attention suddenly arrested by a tiny sealed note on his mantelpiece. On opening it he read as follows:

"Your 'Maid of Lodi' will haunt me to my dying day! I would give worlds to be awakened by it—as that ogress of a

schoolmistress was—in the dark of a spring morning! I did not like to mention the fact to you in the drawing-room to-night, but this is the eve of my birthday! I am always very wakeful between one and two o'clock. My room, as you know, is immediately over the library, on the south side of the house."

"J."

And at the very moment that these two old gentlemen were perusing these insinuating missives, Leo, in his "den" on an upper floor, was settling himself into an easy-chair for a comfortable cigar.

"Now I flatter myself," he was saying, "that I've done the thing very neatly—handwriting and composition included. Now will they rise to the bait?—that's the question. Good-bye to their reputation for gallantry if they back out of it! And it means flannel nightcaps and gruel for a fortnight if they go in for it. There's a lovely east wind blowing to-night!"

FIGURE FOUR.

PARTNERS JOIN HANDS TO PLACES.

LEO was not allowed to enjoy his cigar many minutes in peace. There came a rap at his door, and in response to his "Come in," Saunders entered.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, sir," he said, "but just as I was going to bed, Lord Exmoor's valet came down to me and said that my lord had been seized with a sudden attack of gout, and would be glad to know if there were any acetic acid in the house?"

"Gout! What a brilliant idea! I admire his ingenuity!" cried Leo.

"Sir?" said Saunders.

"Oh, you must go to Sir Peter for the acid," Leo resumed. "He always keeps a few bottles handy in his own room. I dare say he's in his first sweet sleep, and you'll get something thrown at your head, but that won't matter much."

But Sir Peter was a good way off his first sweet sleep. He was still standing over his fire, staring at the note he held in his hand, and listening to the east wind which moaned in his chimney.

The demand for acetic acid at his door brought an idea in its train.

"Gout, by all's that glorious!" he said to himself. "Now, if it had only attacked me instead of him, it would have helped me neatly out of this dilemma. But why shouldn't it attack me as well as him, I should like to know? We each ate the

same dinner to-night, and drank the same wine. Bravo! Saunders," he cried aloud, "tell my lord I'm very sorry, but I want every bottle I have for my own immediate use—" then he stopped himself all in a hurry. "No," he cogitated, rubbing his chin, "that won't do either. Leo would get that confounded doctor into the house to-morrow, and it would mean toast and water and sago pudding for a month. Besides, it would bring the fact of my sixty years unpleasantly before the Lady Joan, and might frighten her off at once."

Saunders put his head in at the door. "Did you say you was taken bad too, Sir Peter?" he asked.

"No, no," said Sir Peter hurriedly, "a little twinge—nothing to speak of—I shall sleep it off. Take the bottles, they're in that cupboard. In for a penny, in for a pound," he groaned, as Saunders departed with the lotion. "Gruel and poultices wouldn't be any worse than toast and water and sago, and the honour and the glory of the thing ought to count for something. Perhaps, too, in a fur coat, and with something tied over my head, I may defy even the east wind."

Leo puffed away at his cigars. The house gradually settled itself into the deep silence of night.

Half-past twelve struck. "Now I wonder if he'll suddenly develope small-pox or measles, by way of getting out of the difficulty," thought Leo. One o'clock struck. "By Jove, he's going to back out of it," he said to himself. Half-past one struck, and then there came the sound of a door cautiously opening, and of a stealthy step descending the stairs. "By Jove, he's going in for it," cried the young man. "I admire his pluck!"

Slowly on tip-toes a dark figure, with a night-lamp in its hand, made its way along the gallery, off which the bedrooms opened, to the top of the stairs—a wide, noble flight lighted from above by a corona, which it was the habit of the house to keep burning throughout the night. The dark figure was clad in a long fur coat, and about its head and shoulders was wound a blanket in the fashion of an opera cloud. Leo followed it cautiously at a safe distance. As Sir Peter, having drawn back the bolts of the hall-door, passed out into the night, shading his lamp from the east wind, Leo stepped swiftly out of the shadows where he stood, and with a noiseless hand securely bolted and barred the door once more.

"Now," he said, "I'm off to bed as fast as possible, and it's a question who'll wake up first, Saunders or I. Of course, to-morrow morning my story will be clear enough. I sat up late writing letters, went down to the smoking-room to fetch something I had forgotten, saw the hall-door unfastened, and naturally enough barred and bolted it. It's the one who's shut out who'll have to account for himself."

But Leo did not get to bed so soon as he thought he would. As he entered the gallery off which his bedroom opened, he heard a sudden noise, a rush, a flutter and scamper, "as of ten thousand rats let loose," he told Fan afterwards—and Lady Joan came flying towards him dressed in a long blue dressing-gown, with her front hair done up with gilt crimping-pins. Close on her heels followed Fan in a pink dressing-gown, with her front hair done up in tiny white curling-papers.

"Burglars!" gasped Lady Joan. "There's a man under my windows—something woke me—it sounded like a pebble against the glass—I looked out and saw a dark figure moving—I called to Fan."

"Oh, Leo," cried Fan, catching hold of his arm, "there may be ever so many men round the house. Oh, do, do take care of us!"

"No," said Leo, holding her very tightly, "I won't take care of you. You're an atrocious little flirt. I'll take care of Lady Joan, I'll take care of Miss Miles—"

But at this moment Miss Miles made her appearance at the farther end of the gallery. She had on a scarlet flannel dressing-gown, with a pocket-handkerchief tied over her head.

"What did you say? Burglars?" she exclaimed. "Has no one any presence of mind?" and before any one could stop her she was down the stairs, and, with the air of a Norma, had sounded the big dinner gong.

It was answered immediately by sounds of movement all over the house. Saunders came stumbling up from his sleeping apartment below stairs. Footmen, not in livery—maids, not in caps and aprons, swarmed from other quarters, and Leo, looking upwards from the gallery where he stood, with Fan and Lady Joan one either side of him, caught sight of Lord Exmoor's dignified head and shoulders bending over a balustrade a floor higher.

"My lord," he cried, "I should get back to bed again as fast as possible. Gout driven inwards is likely to prove fatal!"

Suddenly, in the midst of all this hubbub, there came a tremendous assault on the hall-door, which set all the bolts rattling, while a voice outside demanded admission.

"Why, there must be a troop of them; they must be armed," cried Fan.

"Why, it's Sir Peter's voice," said Miss Miles from below; "what in the world is he doing out there at this time of night?"

And Miss Miles, unlocking the hall-door, admitted the master of the house, in his fur coat, with the blanket about his head and shoulders.

Without a word he passed her, making straight for the big staircase, where the maids looked down upon him from above and the men looked up at him from below, and where stood his son and heir and the two ladies waiting to receive him.

"What's all this confounded noise about?" he asked irritably as he came along. "Why are you all out of your beds at this time of night, I should like to know? I opened my window half-an-hour ago to look at the stars in general—Ursa Major in particular—you may have noticed it's very bright to-night. I let fall my signet ring—it always hangs a little loose on my finger. I put on a wrap to go down and look for it, and, lo and behold, someone bolts me out, and someone else sets off screaming, and someone else sounds the dinner gong! What—what—what on earth does it all mean?"

Here a loud sneeze prevented further exclamation.

"I'll tell you what it means, Sir Peter, for some of us who are not so young as they were," said Miss Miles severely; "it means gruel and flannel night-caps, and possibly linseed poultices into the bargain, for a week to come."

And so it did; for Sir Peter, at any rate.

That was to be an eventful week. It saw the departure of Lord Exmoor and Lady Joan.

"My attack of gout threatens to be a sharp one. I must get back to my own doctor as soon as possible," the Earl explained to Leo. But to Lady Joan he said: "After all, I think the lawyers can arrange for an extension of the mortgage far better than I can. And—and you needn't write to Eckersley. He is a gentleman, at any rate, and you might do worse."

And to himself he said:

"I shall be thankful enough to see the last of these people. In houses of this sort one never knows what is going to

happen; they might be asking me to dance a hornpipe next."

Before the week was out, too, Fan confessed her penitence to Leo in her own fashion.

"If you'll only admit, Leo," she said, "that I can flirt just as nicely as other young ladies, I'll promise never to do it again."

To which Leo replied:

"You won't get a chance, Fan. I've seen 'the ten-roomed cottage with good stabling,' and you know what that means."

And during that week Miss Miles kept Sir Peter supplied with such delicious gruel, and such lovely linseed poultices, that, on the first day he came downstairs, he said, addressing her, for the first time in his life, by her Christian name:

"Tabitha, after all, I think fifty matches sixty better than five-and-twenty does. What do you say?"

To which Miss Miles replied:

"Exactly, Sir Peter; I was just about to make the same remark."

THE BED THAT COULD NOT BE MOVED.

By W. W. FENN.

I WAS always influenced by coincidences, presentiments, and strange unaccountable tales. I always enjoyed reading or hearing of them, and for years aspired to be the hero of one. Hours of relaxation without a good sensational tale or ghost story were shorn of half their restful benefit. Of course I knew all the tricks of the ghostly romancer by heart; I was up to all his ancient houses, tapestried chambers, old pictures, furniture, secret panels, and the like; but they amused me to follow none the less, and at one time my only wish was for some personal experience amongst such surroundings. It never came, however, and when at last there did happen to me a startling adventure, it was amidst circumstances the most prosaic and commonplace, having for a background nothing more romantic and weird than a newly-erected suburban and "Jerry-built" house.

Yes, it was in such an unpromising place, and under most matter-of-fact conditions, that I passed through an experience of which even to this day I cannot think without a shudder. Not that it was a ghostly form of the terrible, and, though unnatural,

could not be said to be supernatural ; but it was sufficiently appalling to be classed with any romance of dark deeds and singular escapes.

My business took me entirely out of the region of romance. I had never had a chance of passing a night in a haunted house or room, and, as my studies in that direction led me only to look in such places for what I hoped to find, I was perhaps less prepared for what happened.

It came about in this fashion. The Volunteer movement had just commenced, and I, like other able-bodied youngsters, enlisted in the cause with considerable enthusiasm. Five-and-twenty years ago, those who had more money and leisure than the rest were naturally thought the fittest to undertake commands, without much regard to anything else. Here and there exceptions, however, were made to this unwritten rule, and I was one of these, for certainly I had no money. I do not want to appear egotistical ; but I had a turn for soldiering, was smart, quick, and fairly well set up. I soon acquired proficiency sufficient to justify quick promotion, and ere long I found myself captain of my company. It was said I had the making in me of a good soldier. I obeyed to the letter, and expected others to do the same. Authority, however, was often disputed on parade. The position of an officer, therefore, who knew what he was talking about, was not always an enviable one. Mine was not, for I am hasty and peppery, and seldom measured my words to the rank and file ; but in the main I do not think I was unpopular, and I certainly had no idea that I was sowing the seeds of vengeful ill-will. One young fellow there was, however, who displayed a very turbulent spirit, and perhaps I might have doubted him. But after one or two unseemly disputes, in our relative capacities of captain and private, he, like others of his temper, left the corps, and I utterly forgot his existence and his name.

After two years, the persistent cold shoulder turned by the authorities of the War Office towards the Volunteers, as is well known, had a very cooling effect upon their enthusiasm. Many of the regiments dwindled visibly ; the earnest men became disgusted, and the indifferent threw up what little interest they might originally have taken in the movement. I was amongst the former, and when by degrees the numbers became so reduced that the

whole affair was fast growing farcical, I, too, resigned, and retired for awhile into private life. Regretfully ? Yes, for I had grown fond of soldiering. Still, I saw that unless the movement was placed on a very different footing, the position of a private was far preferable to that of an officer ; indeed, was the only becoming one for a citizen-soldier to hold. This feeling led me eventually to join another corps in that capacity. I enjoyed the shooting, the exercise, and the drill ; refusing all offers of promotion, content to play the humble and obscure part of an amateur Tommy Atkins.

When the third year of this service was drawing to its close, there came round a certain Easter time, bringing with it, according to custom, the Volunteer Review. I cared little for these military promenades, contributing, as they then did, to little else than pomp and vanity ; but I thought I would attend this one, which was to be held in the neighbourhood of Goldchester, my birthplace, away up in the Midlands ; but to which I had not been for eighteen years. I thought I should like to visit the old and once familiar spot. I heard it had improved and grown into a large manufacturing town, and I was curious, if not sentimental, on the subject. My finances, however, were low, and although I knew I could go inexpensively enough for the three days with the regiment, I wanted a longer and more uninterrupted time at the place in order to give my curiosity, and such sentiment as I had, full play. So I determined to spend a week in the town on the cheap, and join headquarters when they arrived there.

A large, wild, and open tract of heath and moorland, for which the neighbourhood was distinguished, offered a splendid battle-ground for the amateur soldiers, and this, in former days, had been a favourite haunt of mine. Now, I was told, the suburbs of Goldchester extended nearly to the skirts of this moor, and I settled that I would try and find a lodging on that side of the town.

Well, I arrived on the Monday afternoon preceding the Good Friday, and made straight to carry out my intention, but when I had threaded my way through what were formerly the limits of the town in the direction of the moor, I simply lost myself. Grown and altered, indeed, was everything, with lines of new streets, tramcars, and bustle, where once had been green lanes ; but eventually I got clear of

these and found myself in the new suburb. The outskirts of manufacturing towns are seldom so cheerful and pretty as these happened to be, and although there was an unfinished look about the most recently-built streets and rows of houses, and although these were in themselves somewhat mean and essentially "Jerry-built," they were not exactly ugly. Their intrusion upon the greenery of Nature had spared many fine trees and clusters of trees which, intermingling pleasantly with the bricks and mortar, veiled and softened the inherent obtrusiveness of the pretentious architectural lines. A fairly broad and pretty river, willow-fringed and rush-margined, likewise lent considerable attraction to the district through which it wound in many a picturesque sweep and bend. The row of houses, in one of which I took up my abode, backed on to this river, down to the banks of which ran little narrow strips of gardens, from the rear of the buildings, whilst their wooded character afforded a bright and cheerful outlook from the windows. There were not more than half-a-dozen dwellings in Chester Terrace, as it modestly called itself, and when I first came upon it and saw the words, "Apartments for a Single Gentleman," in the window of an end house, I determined at once to negotiate for them. Indeed there was no choice, for at the next door—the only other occupied tenement—there was nothing to let; the row did not appear to have been finished more than a few weeks. The landlord was at home when I knocked, and a brass plate on the door informed me that his name was Carstack, engineer and surveyor. The next door too, number five, had another plate on it with the name, "Mr. Raphael Carstack, Surgeon, etc." In reply to my enquiry, the engineer begged me to walk in. He was effusively polite, but his voice was harsh, unpleasant, and not without a faint foreign accent.

"Would I be so good as to look at the rooms?—on the first floor, back and front. He was sure he would make me comfortable. His daughter-in-law was an excellent cook—she lived next door with her husband, and came in and out to attend upon lodgers."

The terms being low, I went upstairs to inspect. A comfortable sitting-room with bed-room adjoining behind, both simply but neatly furnished; the bed alone calling for any special mention. It was somewhat peculiar-looking, from being very low, iron, without hangings, and for a single person.

I agreed to engage the apartments for the inside of a fortnight.

"You have come to take part in our great military display, sir," said Mr. Carstack, watching me as I stood my rifle in a corner and unslung my knapsack, for of course I was in uniform and in heavy marching order—rather more heavy perhaps than became a soldier. "Ah! it will be a fine display—good practice and excellent training. It is an admirable movement, this. My son is a Volunteer and a capital shot, but he has not much time—doctors are busy men."

I expressed satisfaction, and the voluble landlord continued:

"As you are here so soon, you will perhaps enter the rifle competition, which takes place this week on the moor. There are many prizes—some very valuable, and open to all comers, some."

"Ah! indeed?" I said, "I am glad to know that. Certainly I shall go in for a little shooting. There should be an excellent range to be found on the moor."

"Oh! yes, first rate, sir; but excuse me, you seem to speak as if you knew the place? You are, perhaps, no stranger?"

"No, I knew Goldcheester years ago."

"Really? Do you know many of the inhabitants?"

"No, I suspect not now. Most of those I knew are dead, and others would not remember me."

"It is long then since you were here? Many years perhaps?" continued Carstack inquisitively, and eyeing me furtively. "And your name, sir? your name might be known, if not yourself."

"My name is Garratt—Richard Garratt," I answered, "but I doubt if any of my family are to be found in Goldcheester now."

He appeared struck by the name, started at it almost, and then regarded me more curiously than ever.

"But now, perhaps, you will get me something to eat," I went on, a little bored by the man's curiosity and manner. I had rapidly made up my mind that I did not like him. He had a sinister aspect and a bad face, though he was fairly good-looking; dark, about sixty, and decidedly not wholly English. The effect my name produced on him set me wondering if I could remember his as connected with the town, and after a bit, I did seem to recover a dim memory of it. Yes, it certainly was associated somehow with my early days, but too

vaguely to give me a lead as to any circumstances connected with it. I am naturally taciturn, and perhaps not very sociable, and on this occasion I felt unusually depressed. The return to the old place, the recollections it brought back, and the reference the man had made to my possible acquaintances in it, revived memories not exhilarating.

So after awhile I went forth for a stroll while my meal was preparing. In the course of the ramble, I came across the headquarters of the local corps, where a placard announced, with the full particulars of the rules, entries, etc., that the prizes for the Grand Rifle Competition on Goldstone Moor were "now on view." I read, became interested, and went into the building. I determined to enter myself at least for the "All Comers" Prize—a handsome silver-gilt goblet with a purse of twenty sovereigns, and there it stood amongst others, on a sort of counter in front of me. I thought I should like to pull that off; it would be very acceptable, and I was prepared to back my skill. I did so, by paying the necessary small fees to the attendant, had my name and that of my corps entered in the official list of competitors, and then looked over it. Amongst them was the name of Raphael Carstack, doubtless that of my landlord's son—the doctor.

The shooting was to take place on the two following days, so I determined that I would not give way to the sad memories which the neighbourhood revived, and that I should infinitely prefer two or three days on the open, breezy moor after all, to spending them in wandering about the now, to me, lonely streets.

Everything was satisfactory and comfortable at the lodgings, but the bedstead still attracted my attention. When stooping to look at it, I tried to push its head close up to the wall; to my amazement I found it could not be moved. The short legs were riveted to the floor. Was there ever such a queer arrangement? And what could be its purpose? It stood isolated, facing the window, but, as I say, not with its head close to the wall; the space of a foot at least was between. Well, I could not make it out, so I turned in and slept soundly. I may note that a second door in the room appeared to communicate with the next house, but had no lock or any sign of fastening on my side. It seemed to be a fixture, solid and without any apparent means of being opened.

The next morning I could not refrain from questioning the young woman—the daughter-in-law—who served my breakfast, about the bed. She appeared unable, certainly unwilling, to expatiate on the subject. It was some invention of her father's; he was always inventing one thing or another—she didn't understand them. A comely, intelligent, but sad and scared-looking woman, neat, handy, and attractive, but not quite of the stamp one expects to find in the wife of a medical man; nor did her occupation harmonise with her position. As she was about to leave the room she glanced back at me, and, putting her finger to her lips, said, lowering her voice:

"Don't ask about that bed, sir. Don't seem surprised at it. Take my advice." Then, walking close up to me, she whispered: "Keep good friends with them—my father and husband I mean."

Startled and surprised for a moment, I did not speak, and she was again about to leave the room when I called her back peremptorily.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "I keep good friends with everybody I hope; your father and husband are not likely to give me cause to break my habit, I suppose?"

"I hope not; but they are dangerous to quarrel with."

"How long have you been married?"

"Not six months, and I wish I'd never seen him."

"Does your husband ill-treat you?"

"Not quite that; very near. But I'm afraid of them both."

Tears were starting in her eyes, and she seemed on the point of unburthening her mind further when a footstep in the passage below was audible, and she flew from the room like a frightened hare.

"Sufficiently mysterious all this," I thought, "and not reassuring. I must keep my eyes open." Then, in a not quite comfortable frame of mind, I prepared for my shooting expedition, shouldered my rifle, and in the course of half-an-hour found myself one of many stragglers who were wending their way towards the rifle-range.

A bright and lovely spring morning, without wind, and with a soft, subdued, yet clear light, it was all that a good shot could desire. I do not linger to describe the scene. The arrangements were orderly, and conducted after the usual manner of such gatherings. Volunteers from various neighbouring corps made up the squads of

competitors for the various prizes at various ranges. Some were entirely composed of the uniforms belonging to the Gold-chester company, and two or three of these eventually fell in with the shooting party for the All Comers Prize, in which I was concerned. Our names and qualifications attested, and our rifles duly examined, after the customary loose and happy-go-lucky system, or want of system, which was adopted in those days, we marched to the range in charge of a militia sergeant, and went through the preliminary stages of the competition.

All this I pass over. It is enough that, in the course of the afternoon, I and three others stood out as the four highest scorers, qualified to shoot off the last stage. Three others, and as their names were called out, I noted that of Raphael Carstack. One look left no doubt that he was the son of his father—as like him as he could stare—and stare he did at me considerably. Nor did I fail to return his gaze, for it had gradually grown upon me that I knew his face. At last I caught it, but only just before we had arrived at the critical moment of the contest. He and I had made the two highest scores out of the four with a tie, and were about to shoot it off, at eight hundred yards. He was to fire first, and as he dropped on his knee in position, he gave me about as malicious a look as human eyes are capable of, and it was that look which told me where I had seen him before. He was that young recalcitrant fellow in my old company who had insulted me on parade five years ago! Surely an ominous coincidence this—our being brought together again under these circumstances—and in more direct opposition than ever!

Whether his temper, stirred by his old animosity and increased by our present position, affected his shooting, I do not know. But in his five rounds he failed to score what was possible by some three or four points—the consequences being that I went in, beat him easily, and was pronounced winner of the prize. The venom in his eyes, it is needless to say, was not diminished after this, nor did any civil effort of mine at conciliation affect it. I thought it better not to refer to the past—he appeared to do the same. The few words we exchanged referred almost exclusively to the business on hand; and although I made some reference to my having taken up my abode under his father's roof, he ignored that fact, being

too much occupied in the meal he was making off his own heart with disgust, mortification, and hatred of me, for having snatched the goblet and the twenty pounds from his grasp.

At the end of the day, as I returned to the lodgings, I thought to myself:

"Well, whatever his young wife may have meant, fate has ordained that I should fly in the very face of her advice!" I had quarrelled most effectually with one member of her family, and by no fault of my own.

As bed-time arrived, my mind naturally reverted more than ever to the girl's reticence about that immovable bedstead, and I gave it closer examination. This showed me that the legs dropped into little sockets or holes in the floor, and could not be lifted out of them. This looked as if it might be connected with the room beneath. Then what was beneath? Merely the ground-floor back—the landlord's sleeping apartment. The window gave upon the garden behind. Spring twilight still lingered in the sky, and, as I looked out, I saw father and son down at the end of the garden among the bushes close to the river. They were both attentively regarding my window at the instant I drew up the blind. When they saw me they faced round, as if disliking being caught spying. There was nothing in all this, very likely; yet after what had passed it was not to be overlooked.

Again I soon turned in, but did not sleep well. At first I was strangely restless, and later heavily drowsy and dream-troubled. Young Carstack and his father appeared to be standing on either side of the bed, and then one became my own father—long dead. Then they both stooped over me, and they both had my father's face close to mine. Then I was out on the moor by the butts—firing was going on, bullets whizzed round my head; one struck me on the arm, and I saw in the distance that it had been fired by young Carstack. He was aiming at me again! In my frantic efforts to get under shelter I awoke. This sort of thing seemed to go on more or less all night, but when up and dressed I did not feel much the worse.

There awaited me on the breakfast table a somewhat bulky envelope, containing a large letter forwarded to me by my landlady at home, to whom I had sent my address the night of my arrival in Chester Terrace. As I was about to tear the outer envelope I noticed that it was soiled, and on a closer

scrutiny it looked very much as if it might have been damped and opened after it had been stuck down. Yes, it certainly had been tampered with. Again, I fancied that the enclosure, a long blue envelope like a lawyer's, had been treated in the same way. However, I did not stop to consider, for I was ignorant of the handwriting and curious to learn the contents. I was not accustomed to receive lawyers' letters. Well indeed might I have been curious, for the document announced that, most unexpectedly, a certain valuable property, actually in Goldchester itself, had been left me by an uncle just deceased. It had belonged to my father, but, through some irregular technicality in his will, had not devolved upon me at his death as I knew it ought to have done. Ten years ago I had had a lawsuit about this property, and lost it. And now here it was bequeathed to me! My uncle and I had quarrelled over it, and had not met for years. I did not know till this moment even where he had been living. And now it turned out he had lived and died in Goldchester, and had been buried the day before my arrival. The letter came from a local lawyer, had been sent to my home, and forwarded thence to me here again at Goldchester. Stranger still, and yet still stranger—the property consisted of the very land on which this new suburb, with Chester Terrace in the centre of it, had been built.

This discovery, arrived at only after close and attentive perusal of the letter now in my hand, literally took my breath away. The bare facts here condensed must be accepted as sufficient, briefly to explain a very complicated business. But they are the facts, and that is all that is wanted.

I did not spend that day at the rifle range, as may be guessed. It was mainly passed in the solicitor's office, and with him in visiting my uncle's residence—a new house recently built on the estate. A childless, lonely, unloved old man, the solicitor seemed to have been nearly his only friend.

That gentleman, in the course of our long confabulation, told me many things concerning him; one matter especially adding considerably to the curious coincidences which had already associated me with the Carstacks. It seems that my uncle's will, by which I inherited, had been made four years previously, but that about a week before his death, he had had another drawn, which he, fortunately for me, had not signed. By it he had left

that notable estate to none other than young Mr. Raphael Carstack, the doctor who had been attending him ever since he settled in the neighbourhood.

"He is a sharp, knowing fellow, that," said the lawyer, "and acquired great influence over your uncle. I am only surprised that he did not take care to see that the will was executed. I drew both the documents and have them in my possession, and I was daily expecting to be summoned to the old gentleman with his second one, that he might sign it. It is strange how people change their minds. Four years ago, when he was first ill, your uncle was keenly anxious that you should have the property—made you his executor with me—told me he regretted having availed himself of the legal inaccuracy, which gave it to him instead of to you. Then this young doctor got hold of him, mesmerised him, as one may say, I suppose, for a while, and induced him to alter the disposition of his wealth; and yet the old man could not make up his mind to dispossess you. Anyway, you have nothing to thank the doctor for—nor he, you, for the matter of that—there will be no love lost between you."

"No, indeed," I exclaimed, and then I recounted to the solicitor my experiences of the Carstack family.

"Yes," he said, "it is very odd, certainly, that you going there as the lodger, should actually, while under their roof, be transformed into the ground landlord of the whole estate."

"Well," I said, "I think I shall move my traps. The sooner I get away the better now, remembering what Mrs. Raphael Carstack said; for, letting alone the shooting episode, I could not have more thoroughly incurred the doctor's animosity than by cutting him out of the property."

"Perhaps it would be as well," said the lawyer, "for, to tell you the truth, neither father nor son is quite beyond suspicion. The elder man originally lived in a very low part of the town, and came there no one exactly knows when or why. There is a rumour that at one time in his life he was kept in retirement for his country's good, and although his son is fully qualified to practise, it is said that, as a medical student in London, he was connected with some professor of mesmerism and spirit-rapping, a charlatan who had to make himself scarce. I should never be astonished to hear that this fellow has to do the same some day. He has little or no practice—seems to be very

needy, and I have heard that he and his father took these two adjoining houses in Chester Terrace with the idea of establishing a sort of mesmeric hospital, or something of that kind. The bed you mention, probably, is some scheme in that direction."

"What does he certify that my uncle died of?" I asked significantly.

"Angina Pectoris; but I believe that's all straight enough. It would have been Carstack's policy to have kept him alive as long as he could, or until that second will was signed."

Further consideration determined me, now that money was no object, to move to one of the hotels; but the three best were quite full, owing to the influx of visitors and Volunteers for the review. Four other attempts to get into second-class inns failed for the same reason. Then I laughed at my weakness. What had I to fear at Chester Terrace? Being there, there I would stay until the review was over. My co-executor the lawyer and I dined together that night. We decided that I should say nothing to the Carstacks on the curious way in which fate had mixed the young doctor up with my affairs. I would wait and see if they took any notice of it. The father let me in, handed me a chamber candle with his usual politeness, but made no reference to the matter, and I finally went to bed, sleeping fairly well. But the following night—the Good Friday Eve—matters came to a climax indeed. Nothing particular occurred at the distribution of the prizes, which took place in the afternoon. I received mine from the hands of the Mayoress of Goldchester, and brought it home.

Mr. Raphael Carstack did not show up, and his father told me apologetically that he had a patient to see at a great distance, and probably would not return home till the morrow. The fellow ostentatiously inspected and admired the goblet, eyed the purse cunningly, and congratulated me.

Naturally I liked him less and less the more I saw of him, and now that bed-time had again come round, I had a greater distaste than ever for my situation. But for the lateness of the hour, I really think I would have gone out and hired a bed at any common public-house. But I must pass over the conflict of feeling with which, about midnight, I lay down for the last time on that bed that could not be moved.

The silence of the house and neighbourhood was entirely undisturbed. The moonlight shone dimly through the half-curtained window. I was tired, and all but my troubled, misgiving spirit seemed propitious for sleep, and to sleep I went in time.

How much of what followed was dream, and how much reality—except the end, which was real enough, Heaven knows!—it is impossible to determine. But here is my experience.

As had occurred two nights before, it seemed to me that the father and son were on either side of the bed, bending over me, but always with my own father's face in each case; but not, as previously, creating any distress in my mind. Their presence rather had a soothing effect now than otherwise; so soothing that, after a while, I dreamed that they were sending me to sleep; and I know no more of how long I so remained, or what happened in the interval, until—well, until I found myself plunged into the ice-cold water of the river at the foot of the garden, swimming for dear life to the bank!

I am no psychologist, and do not pretend to explain what mental condition I had passed into; but the end of that condition, whatever it was, is simply that I was aroused from it by finding myself in the midst of the deep, flowing river, the full moon shining bright and high above my head, glittering on the water and revealing all objects as clear as day.

Fortunately, I am a good swimmer; otherwise I must have been drowned. As it was, after the plunge—how taken I know not—I came to the surface wide awake enough, as may be supposed, and, before I had time almost to be surprised, was standing safe on the shore in my night-dress. Then such a turmoil of amazement, incredulity, and breathless wonder, not unmingled with terror, took possession of me that, for many minutes, I could only lean, panting, against a tree. Ere I had in the least steadied my mind, the two Carstacks stood beside me with outstretched hands, proffers of assistance, and wild expressions of surprise and horror.

"Good Heavens, sir," they cried simultaneously, "what has happened? What have you been doing? You must have been walking in your sleep!"

I could not answer, and the elder continued:

"We heard your door open; my son had just returned, and we were sitting

talking. We heard your door open, I say, and your footsteps going downstairs; we heard you unlock the back door and go out; and when you did not come back after several minutes, we thought it so strange that we both came out to look for you, and then we suddenly saw you standing here! What can it mean? Pray come indoors. Let us help you."

Still bewildered, but gradually recovering somewhat of my presence of mind, I hurried with them back to the house, into the landlord's front room, where there was a fire. Nothing could be more solicitous than their behaviour. The young doctor gave me some brandy, and they both actively helped to dry and reclothe me.

It would be impossible to recount in detail a tenth part of what was said on either hand. Such a conflict of astonishment, and solicitude, and attempts at explanation went on in wild and disjointed expressions, that I suppose two hours passed before I went upstairs again; the outcome being that there seemed no way of accounting for what had happened save the original one offered, namely, that I had been walking in my sleep. This I doubted from the first. I had never done such a thing before—knew perfectly well I had never been subject to somnambulism.

Once again alone in my rooms, an examination of them threw no light on the matter. The bed merely looked as it would when one leaves it after restless sleep, and the lockless side-door into the next house remained firm shut. The prize purse, however, with its twenty sovereigns, which I had placed in my trousers-pocket, had disappeared! The garment had been brought to me when dressing below stairs, and the money might have fallen out there. But I was too shaken and fatigued to distress myself further then, so I dropped into the easy-chair in the sitting-room.

The spring dawn soon began to break—all was perfectly still once more, and I was beginning to doze, when the very faintest sound of a footstep on the landing aroused me. The door opened, and Mrs. Raphael entered, more scared and fear-stricken than ever.

"I cannot see murder done," she whispered hurriedly, as she came tip-toe towards me. "Leave this house. He made you do what he wished. I have heard him boast of such things. He made you walk of your own accord into the river, hoping you would drown. They little thought I was watching. I dare not stop to explain

if I could. They might hear me, and would then serve me the same—they will make away with me some day, I know. Promise not to let out what I say—only don't trust that bed again, and don't speak of me. Promise to be silent."

I vainly tried to detain her as she then flew from the room, and I heard her, a few minutes later, lighting the fire down in the kitchen, with an ostentation of noise.

It was just as I had suspected, then! The extraordinary condition which had overtaken me was due to some mysterious trickery connected with that bed—some magneto-electric hanky-panky in which this young doctor might have become an adept through his former association with that spirit-rapping impostor spoken of by the lawyer. That was my conclusion as soon as I had time to pull my wits together. What the precise nature of the process was, no one, probably, could say. Nor, for the sake of the poor woman, would I enquire too curiously—at least not for the present. Equally for her sake I had abstained from asking Carstack about the bed previously. No! I would quit the house forthwith, but without, if possible, arousing suspicion, and, if possible, without encountering these two villains again. Therefore, I employed the next hour in quietly packing my knapsack and bag, etc. At seven o'clock I went downstairs, feeling sure that the men would be asleep, and calling quietly to Mrs. Raphael, said:

"I am going out, but shall be back to breakfast at ten."

Then I hurried away, fully accoutred, and reached my friend the lawyer's before he was up. An explanation followed, and we decided to send one of his clerks to pay what I owed in Chester Terrace, and to say that I was unexpectedly prevented from returning.

Thus I passed the Good Friday, and, considering all things, settled to give up the review and return home on the Saturday, and did so. My changed fortunes implied a changed life, involving much business. Whatever views I might have formed for ultimately looking further into my mysterious experience, and, if possible, of punishing the culprits, were never carried out, for the simple reason that, within a fortnight, letters from my solicitor contained the following information:

"Your friends, the Carstacks, are in trouble. The wife of the younger was yesterday morning found dead in her bed, and there is so much mystery, I am told,

about the cause of her death, that father and son lie under grave suspicion."

Later on, the following came to hand :

"The inquest has failed to solve the mystery. All the doctors could say was that death had arisen from failure of the heart's action, though how caused, there was no evidence to show. A verdict to that effect, therefore, was returned. But that there was foul play somehow may be inferred from the fact that the two Carstacks have bolted. One does not know exactly yet what is going to be done with their belongings. Meanwhile, an examination of the two houses has led to the discovery of an electric battery of great power placed directly beneath your remarkable bed and connected with it ; whilst wires from it were conducted to another bed in the doctor's house exactly similar to yours, and on which the poor woman was found. I am not scientific, and do not pretend to explain the working of such mysterious forces ; but these discoveries have been sufficient to induce the authorities to issue warrants for the apprehension of both men, on the charge of contriving the death of young Mrs. Carstack."

They were never caught—never heard of again at Goldchester. This was in 1864.

Last year I paid a visit to the States, and, in a prosperous new town, far away in the West, a doctor had established himself, who professed to effect wondrous cures by electricity and mesmerism. A pamphlet issued by him, on the quack-doctor pattern, fell into my hands. In it I read, amidst a mass of impudent verbiage, his argument to the effect that, as electricity was a marvellous agent in curing hysteria, epileptic fits, etc., so could it be turned to useful account as a great mesmeric curative agent, on the principle of like curing like. He urged that soothing, beneficial trances could be produced by the patient reclining on a certain bed, which he had patented, and through which galvanism could be applied after the manner in which electric baths are given.

Need it be said that these words struck me? I took a look at his establishment, and found that it called itself "The Mesmeric Hospital," conducted by Dr. Gableton. But as strange coincidences seemed destined to be associated with this matter to the last, I happened, whilst gazing at the house from the opposite side of the street, to observe a middle-aged man come out, in whom I had no difficulty in recognising, despite the lapse of more than twenty years,

Mr. Raphael Carstack. He did not see me, and, as I was only passing through the place, I did not think it my business to trouble myself with him or his doings. But the fact makes a significant end to my story, which, perhaps, would not have been written but for it.

CHRISTINE LA BARBE.

By MARIA L. JENKIN.

CHAPTER I.

IT was one of the early days of May—and what can we say better than that when we are going in the next moment to set before you a London crowd?

The chance freaks of April sunshine and showers were over ; the sun was warm and glad ; the roses were coming ; the May-bloom had come ; the London grass was green and fresh ; and the London trees were green and fresh, too.

Ay, truly, May is the time to see London at its best, and where better can one catch the essence of the pleasant graciousness and fulness of London life than in the Park?

But to see what we see, you must shut your eyes a moment and go back ten years, fifteen years, nay, many more in truth ; but we do not wish to give the literal year, because we do not wish in any way to suggest a personal exactitude for the beings or the doings of our story.

Being so early in May, perhaps the Row was not so crowded as it would be a week or so hence, but it was full enough. People say that in no capital of Europe does one see such equipages, such horses, such lovely faces, as one sees in the "Row" in the height of the London season. And on the special day we set before you there were many foreigners about—men and women of distinction and with historic names, amid those who rolled by in the luxurious carriages ; men and women, too, of sorrier aspect, of worn and saddened aspect, amongst the standing onlookers. Something more than fifteen years ago—you see we will be lax as to date—France had had a great upheaval ; a great war ; a great subjugation ; and her sons and her daughters had, hundreds of them, come over to our welcoming shores.

Of all intensely English groups there was none more English than one which, by the stopping of a barouche, became for a few moments a prominent one.

An old lady—well, say, a woman of

sixty, but we call her old in contradistinction to her young companion—leaned back upon the dark purple paddings of the carriage. Her hair was grey, but not white, therefore lacking the peculiar distinction which white hair gives to even a plain woman of dark eyes and tint. Nevertheless, Miss Haylesford was striking. She always wore black, but her individuality must have been strong enough to be felt above the unmarked beauty of her face and the as unmarked fashion of her clothes. By her side was a girl. She was the very incarnation of Spring in her light, rose-tinted, feathery-trimmed dress; a parasol, too, all of soft-hued pinkish feathers, was carelessly laid down across to the opposite seat as she leaned forward to talk. If her dress suggested the very spring-time of roses, then, surely, she herself suggested the golden beauty of some Saxon maiden, whose snowy skin and whose yellow tresses the poets have sung. Saxon, too, was her name—Matilda.

Haylesford was her surname, as was that of the old lady, and as was that also of the bronzed young man whose advent upon the scene had caused the stopping of the carriage. The young couple were cousins, the old lady was their aunt, the sister of a certain Jonathan Haylesford, banker, of Lombard Street, and of Wexford Gardens, Hyde Park.

"Well, good-bye, then, for the present!" So said Duke, or Marmaduke Haylesford, after a three minutes' talk.

"Oh, you have made up your mind at last, then!" the girl cried.

"Made up his mind—has he a mind to make up?" the old lady said slowly, but with a gleam in her dark eyes as if she were amusing herself. "He has only caught sight of someone, and that someone has carried off that part of him which he calls his mind!"

"Aunt!" There was reproach in the girl's cry; but perhaps, as she laughed at the same time, there was a family habit of making fun of the young man.

He was fair and Saxon-hued beneath the tan which a year's travel had graced him with, and the quick, red blood surged up, and a flash came into his blue eyes at the same moment that the girl had made her reproachful cry. Then, as had happened with her, this serious touch of the subject was laughed away, and with the anger all blown aside, he said, with the careless gaiety of one who is accustomed to parrying good-humoured criticisms:

"If you must know, Maida, my bit of a mind was made up long before. I had no intention of driving with you, but I had an intention of inviting myself to dinner."

"Curiosity! And suppose she is ugly, or a barbaric foreigner? Or, worse than all, suppose she has never come at all, and only papa turns up?"

"In those last circumstances I shall not stay late."

Duke stroked his fair moustache.

"And your uncle would be justified in being angry. Would every man of his age be chivalrous enough to go all the way to Dover to meet his daughter's companion?"

"Papa would," was the girl's illogical answer. "Besides, if Christine is to be my companion, is she not also the daughter of papa's friend, who is ruined by this horrid war? Duke"—and the girl became soft and pleading—"would it not be kinder for you to come another night?"

"A French girl is not shy."

"Why not?" Matilda's sweet face was a little more rosy.

Her cousin only shrugged his shoulders gaily and said lightly:

"I really don't know; at any rate, if she is, she will only be all the more charming. I shall come." He raised his hat and moved back.

"If you don't forget," the old lady cried. And though the carriage was already on the move, the progress was quite slow enough for the words to reach him.

"Yes, yes; that, of course!" And perhaps there was the least suspicion of a little drawl in the sentence. "But as Reeves announces dinner he will announce me."

This was heard as easily by the ladies, and they nodded their faith or unfaith to him.

"Just the same!" Miss Haylesford remarked, as much to herself as to Matilda. "The year's knocking about the world has not altered him."

"Do you think that, aunt? He seems to me quite old sometimes. At the Crawleys', last night—"

"Sir Hugh Crawley would make any man show himself at his best."

To this the girl gave no answer. Was one needed?

Friends were passing, and she nodded to them in her sweet, perhaps rather languid way, and then she seemed to lose the vivacity under which we have seen her. Vivacity with Matilda Haylesford needed

to be roused by some person or event that touched her alone, and without such contact she was quiet and sweet. She was kindness and goodness itself; but she was—nay, how can we put it without making her appear inane, which she was not?—shall we say she had very little power of originating?

And perhaps this easy, sweet nature had been fostered, because in her whole life she had been dominated by persons of strong will and of abundant energy. Her mother she never remembered; her busy, active father, and her busy, active aunt had brought her up.

Now a new element was coming into her life. She was gay and glad over it. A girl was coming to live with her, to be like a sister; her aunt said to save her from many a walk which she herself did not care to take, but which was good for Maida. Her father said, "H'm! as a sort of beginning for one of poor La Barbe's children. He'll never recover himself—never can."

Perhaps M. La Barbe thought he could recover himself in time. Nevertheless, for Christine to have an English home for a year or two would be a good thing. She was young as yet—too young for much.

Eight o'clock was striking.

It was the dinner hour at the Haylesfords', but what a very informal appearance did the luxurious drawing-room present! Travelling gear of all sorts was thrown on chair, and table, and settee—a man's light dust-coat, a hat, a railway rug; a bundle of shawls and umbrella and parasol all strapped together, and not strapped very neatly either; even a girl's brown hat.

And the people assembled were, two of them, those we have seen: Miss Haylesford, in black silk and a cap of old lace; Matilda, in white, with spring-suggesting ribbons of pale yellow about it. A string of pearls was round a throat, firm and white like that of a Greek divinity; she was a picture of ethereal loveliness in her fair and tender colouring. Then, for contrast, stood the grey-haired father in the black frock-coat of the respectable, middle-aged Londoner, his face ruddy and dusty with travel, and a spice of unusual excitement. Opposite him was another traveller.

The daintiest brown maiden imaginable; barely of middle height, in the trimmest of brown stuff dresses, made piquante by a large falling linen collar and white linen cuffs. A jacket was thrown over one arm,

and her plump, brown hands were demurely folded. Demureness was in her pose, but, by no means in her glance; if her brown, closely-coiffured head were bent, then, at the same moment, her dark brown eyes glanced enquiringly at the old lady and the young.

The first stroke of eight chimed from a clock somewhere in the distant, backward part of the room.

"We must hurry, my dear—there's dinner!" Mr. Haylesford cried, in genial John-Bullism.

"Hein!—is it so—le diner?" and looking from Mr. Haylesford, who had been her travelling guardian, the girl turned with a quaint touch of timorousness in her eyes to the stranger ladies.

"Yes," said Miss Haylesford. "We will not expect you to change your dress, and Warton shall help you unpack afterwards. Just brush your hair, and come down."

All this was very homely and kind, but Miss Haylesford could not help showing a certain amount of dignity, seeing that dignity was a part of herself; and to a girl who had never been out of Paris in her life until now, the words were so much Greek. To learn English at school, to say a few sentences in a glib non-comprehending fashion—what help is that towards the translation of those long sentences?

"Ah! but I do not understand!" and Christine waved her hands in trouble, and then tightly clasped them together. "I spik English so bad; ah! you spik French for me. I will know, then—I will learn quick! quick! another day!"

These are the sort of words, but who can make a picture of the reality of the girl's distress?

"Diner, diner, en cinq minutes," said Mr. Haylesford loudly, as if she were deaf. "Very dirty!" he showed his hands. "Wash, wash—quick, vite! vite!—Maida, don't be an idiot, speak French to her."

"Ah, Monsieur, I understand," Christine nodded with bright and sparkling eyes. "Monsieur is so good. I am quick, quick! I come in two minutes!"

Then Miss Haylesford, having had a second of time for preparation, gathered up her long unused French, and, in very presentable guise, said something about her niece showing Mademoiselle La Barbe to her room.

So the two girls gathered up the various gear and went out of the room. Nay, they were only just opening the door for

that purpose, when lo ! it was opened from outside by Reeves.

"Dinner is served, ma'am."

So far, so good. Reeves was retiring rather more quickly than his wont, on seeing his young mistress so closely facing him.

He had no sooner turned, than again he was met face to face—this time, by a young man, a fair young man in evening dress. Again, therefore, the girls were stopped.

"Mr. Marmaduke Haylesford, ma'am," Reeves announced.

"Ah !" even the languid and the world-travelled Duke was uttering this ejaculation in sheer surprise. Matilda, with her arms laden, was in front of him, and also the brightest, daintiest, quaintest French girl.

"We must fly, Duke !" was Maida's cry. How lovely was the girl in her fairness, and under her pretty, rosy excitement ! "But I'll introduce you—this is my cousin," she said to her companion in French, "Marmaduke Haylesford and—Duke, Mademoiselle La Barbe. Now, we must be quick, Mademoiselle !"

Duke made his bow gravely enough. But he looked at the two girls running upstairs, and looked with a pleasant smile upon his face.

He strolled into the drawing-room, and lazily sinking into a chair, said as lazily, "So—that is the companion, eh. A dainty little thing—how different to Maida !"

The old lady's eyes quickly answered him. "She is that—Maida gains by the contrast."

"Yes, undoubtedly she does."

Still Duke seemed very weary and languid.

CHAPTER II.

OF course the dinner that night was cheerful enough. Sometimes Mr. Haylesford could be grim and a bit silent, and this doubtless would be accounted for, had his household at such times known that "things in the City" had been dull and flat, if not worse. But Jonathan Haylesford never talked business at home to the ladies ; he was nothing, if not chivalrous, and he would never have dreamt of passing his evenings without giving the greater part of them to the drawing-room, and to such conversation as he considered a drawing-room requires.

Investments, and gold, and stocks, and shares, he held to be utterly out of place for the evening hours.

On that day, he said, he had been taking holiday. He had never even looked in at the office, but had driven off to Victoria early, had had an hour or two's lounging at Dover, some lunch, and then had met Mademoiselle.

As he ended, he bowed in his courtly, old-fashioned way to his young guest.

The answering was gay and bright ; she only half knew what he had said, because, as we have said, her English was but of the school-room sort. For the hour of dinner, she had had very little occasion to use it, for Duke spoke French easily and well, "if," as his aunt said, "he did nothing else !" He was interpreter for Mr. Haylesford, and really on that first night Christine, the companion, was decidedly "prima donna." The girl was only seventeen, a year younger than Maida, but here she was amongst strangers, and, for the first time in her life, in what some people would call a position of servitude.

She felt none of the "servitude ;" she could not do so with such kindly people. She was thoroughly enjoying herself, being a true woman, and quite cognisant of the fact that she was winning admiration. Yet, though she was so young, and though her head ran a chance of getting turned by this same admiration, the girl was mistress of herself, and unobtrusively, but very surely, continually turned to Miss Haylesford with a little word of bad English, and again with some graceful French politeness that the old lady understood well enough.

Like the school-girl she had so lately been, she made a little curtsy after dinner, when, being nearest the door, she yet waited for Miss Haylesford to precede her.

Her action and her pretty ways had softened the old lady's dignity, and she quickly took Christine's hand and led her with her out of the room. "You must learn English, Mademoiselle, and then we shall manage better," she said, as they went up the stairs.

"Ah, Madame ! I fear I will learn English slowly," answered Christine, shrugging her shoulders and lifting her eyebrows. "Everyone will speak French so well ! I will only always speak French !" and she gave a little flourish with one hand.

Miss Haylesford laughed. The little piece of flattery was very nice—yes, she did feel elated that her half-forgotten French had come out so well. She tapped the girl's shoulder with her fan and said, "Now run up to your room, and Warton shall come

and help you. Come down in half-an-hour." This was managed in French somehow; perhaps it is as well not to reproduce it too exactly.

Christine was gay. "Yes, yes, I spik English maintenant. I open my box, I take ma robe et je——"

"No, no—you are not to dress," explained Maida. "Only unpack, and let Warton, aunt's maid, help you. And come down here to us in half-an-hour."

"Oui, oui—tout-desuite"—she ran up laughing.

But we cannot possibly go on in this fashion, giving detail after detail; days and weeks went on, and Christine was always charming. All her little history was told; and of the Haylesford history, such as it was, she also knew all.

Really, that last-named history was nothing. There had been many Haylesfords, who had been bankers and heads of the same house, which a certain James Haylesford now ruled. James was the elder brother of Jonathan; he was the father of the youngman Marmaduke; he was a widower, living a luxurious life between chambers, and club, and office. "Home," if ever young Marmaduke became sentimental over such a word, would mean to him the house in Wexford Terrace, and another house in Hertfordshire, "The Cedars;" in fact, it would mean where his uncle, and aunt, and Maida were at home.

The old time-worn idea had rooted itself in the minds of the two brothers—does it not run on the very surface of the story?—Marmaduke and Matilda must marry each other.

Long years ago, nay, when Maida was first born and Marmaduke wearing his first jacket, the fathers had talked and laughed over the princely house which might be established, if those same babies would "fall in love." Happily that time-honoured notion of "falling into love" was to be a *sine qua non*.

Now Maida was eighteen, and no hint of such a dream had floated across her maiden's vision. As to Marmaduke, he was a man, and manly enough, though he liked to indulge in shows of languor and laziness. His father had many a time said a word on the subject, and together they had laughed and let it drift away.

The old man was cunning—he meant to have his way, but with just that slight hint he meant to stop, and let Marmaduke think he had discovered the idea for himself.

He sent him to travel for a year.

Marmaduke was nothing loth. He inherited no taste for business, and as Dent, the clerk who had been made partner, changing the old firm from "Haylesford Brothers," to that of "Haylesford Brothers and Dent," was likely to be ruler in the future, Marmaduke calmed his easy conscience by telling himself that he need trouble himself about the office scarcely at all.

But Marmaduke was twenty-six, and a man of that age, so his father argued, ought to think of marrying.

Still, he said not one word to his son, he only one day laughed in his dry way as he said to his brother, "The young fool! he'll wake up when he sees Maida snatched up by Milord Tomnoddy! She's a beautiful girl, your Maida!"

"Plenty of time, plenty of time, James. Maida is not in such a hurry to fly away!"

And then each brother put on his hat, and, stepping into his cab, drove off to his home and his dinner.

James's home was his club.

In Jonathan's home he found everything topsy-turvy, so to speak. It was June now, and already there were signs of London growing too hot, and beginning to empty itself. In a week many houses would have their shutters closed, painters perhaps at work, anyhow deserted by "the family."

The Haylesfords gave a ball on that night, and in less than a week they would be away at The Cedars.

Men were in possession arranging rooms; a florist's cart was at the door and plants were being carried in, presently to appear massed in gorgeous tropic bloom and leafage. Already a landing, which the master could see, was finished—a fairy-land of flowers and quaint Eastern lanterns.

CHAPTER III.

NIGHT came.

The great drawing-room was softly ablaze with tinted lights. A gently moving throng, for a dance was just over, was moving adown its magnificent length. Maida, tall and fair, seemed the centre of the crowd, but, as she moved slowly, leaning on Duke's arm, she was utterly unconscious of that prominence of herself.

She wore creamy white, with the sheen of satin, and pearls, and lace about her;

a string of pearls round the pillar of her throat was her only jewel. Her own brilliant fairness was only more brilliant above this white decking, though some might think that the contrary would have been the effect. No, she herself dominated, and for the crown of her queenhood there was sunny, rippling, gold hair, with its warmth of brown shadows.

Ah! and she had other colouring, new colouring. Within the deep blue of her eyes was the gladness the gay scene about her might naturally evoke. There was also a new light.

That light was the light of love—yes, assuredly it was.

Only that morning had Marmaduke come in, bringing her flowers for the evening—he had done so many a time before—but on that morning, as she had stood thanking him, he had said a word, only a vague word:

“Should I not always bring the best I can for you, Maida?”

Really the literal words had been nothing, but Marmaduke had—one can so easily do this when one has the mind to do it—set a subtle meaning within their simple sound.

And so, with Marmaduke her partner again and again, the evening was wearing away, and Maida was in the sweet dream-land of love. Love that as yet is not robbed of its ethereal phantasy, that as yet is visionary, cloudy, ecstatic, and not wholly a thing to be clasped because—because a plain-spoken word has not made it a thing of earth.

Marmaduke—here is an interlude to explain what may appear a sudden move on the part of this young man, who was so sunnily satisfied with things as they had been—Marmaduke had all at once, within the last few days, dropped his lazy ease. By himself and to himself, he had looked at things as the past few weeks had drifted them about him.

He had simply amused himself just one degree too much on one line.

He pulled himself up, told himself that he must change. He must play no more, he must—nay, he had pleasure in obeying that “must”—dally no longer, but set himself to win his beautiful cousin for his wife.

Music began again—the dreamy voluptuous swaying of waltz music came from the distance.

Maida drew her hand from within her cousin's arm, and it fell half-languidly, meeting its fellow. The girl's whole being was in an ecstasy, which set her as it were in an unreal world. The head was slightly bent, but no such bending could lessen the distinguished maidenly majesty of her carriage.

Two people were in front of these two. One, a tall dark man, as handsome in his sombre-hued manliness as Maida was in her maiden whiteness, was coming towards her with upright bearing, even with a sort of haste.

The second person in front was at some distance, but looking vivaciously forward. This was Christine. She was dark and spirituelle always. On that night her black lace dress and her crimson exotics intensified all that. She was gaily flourishing a fan of crimson feathers towards a man who evidently had been her partner, and whom she was dismissing.

And the next moment Maida was by the side of the dark man, and moving down the long length of the room. She seemed not much to care to dance, neither did her companion care for it one jot; he only wanted her by his side—wanted to feel the light touch of her hand on his arm, to hear the soft, sweet, gentle tones of her voice.

While he and Maida let the dancing slip by, other folks were doing the same.

Here was an instance. Lying by the side of the dancing-room was a small room—really Miss Haylesford's sanctum. In this were luxurious seats, flowers, dim rosy lights—the very perfection of a nook for flirtation.

And Marmaduke with Christine La Barbe were flirting to their hearts' content. You see, the humour of each was just of the right sort to indulge in that probably harmful amusement.

Neither meant any harm. Marmaduke ought to have known better; Christine was a French girl, and as such, would at home have been under rules and regulations of a different sort to that which obtain in an English home. Here she was in England, and with her whole heart enjoying herself. Perhaps she was a bit of a butterfly—a girl who is only just seventeen may be that, and yet may have the making of a noble and wise woman in her.

The dance was over; people strolled in and out; people passed and repassed the door of this little room as they loitered in the long conservatory, into which both drawing-room and morning-room had an

entrance; people—but these last were only two—even leaned against the foliage-hidden doorpost and talked.

In the intervals of this talking they could hear—nay, it came about that one of these two forgot her companion's words in the agony of listening.

"After to-night you will not know me."

This was in Marmaduke Haylesford's voice.

"No? And why shall I not know you? Do you wear a disguise?" Christine asked; and one can easily fancy how she was setting her gay head on one side, comically puzzled.

"Even that might be," he said, dreamily.

"How funny! But Monsieur is grave; will the disguise be for sadness?"

"It will not be for—for this sort of thing."

This was said quickly and gruffly.

"This-sort-of-thing?" the girl mused.

"This"—she accented the word—"is nice. You say 'nice,' not 'agréable,' Monsieur?"

"Naughty but 'nice'"—he laughed—"but when we get down to The Cedars it will be different. But"—and here the young man seemed to pull himself together—"whatever I seem, Christine, remember I am always your good friend, your true friend."

"You make a mystery, Monsieur. I did never doubt that, mon ami. I will say 'mon ami.' I feel more when I say that than when I say 'my friend.'"

"Men say it always——"

At that moment Captain Burwood, Maida's partner, saw that she was not listening to him, and saw also that her fairness, which in his eyes was so lovely, had given place to a burning colour.

"It is so hot here," he said.

"Yes—no; I am so cold. Let us come amongst the people."

Maida said this in a tone louder than her usual voice, and, as she moved, her manner was altogether more determined, more sharp, more alert than her companion would have deemed possible for the suave, sweet grace of Matilda Haylesford.

He wondered a little. Does one ever know the real truth of a girl? he thought.

CHAPTER IV.

THE house in Wexford Gardens was left to its housekeeper, and that which was known as The Cedars was full.

Duke went down with the ladies. Why not? He was son and brother of a sort,

but, being cousin too, was not everything going to be merged in a closer tie?

So he told himself. So, too, the servants, who know so much more always than we let ourselves believe they do, had long ago settled. He was "the young master."

Very soon the house would be full of guests. So on that very evening of arrival Marmaduke, sitting with his uncle, propounded his marriage project.

He felt so sure of Maida, that it could not matter getting over this formality before he spoke the literal word to her. She understood, so Duke pleased himself by thinking, else why did she not laugh with him as easily that day as she had done all the days before the ball? The ball had tired her, perhaps London had tired her.

But on the first morning when he knew she would be out in the gardens before breakfast, he would be up too, and would find her, and would—win her.

Did he?

No, he did not. The programme was exactly carried out, with the exception of that final clause.

Maida coloured rosy, as Duke made his confession and so warmly pressed his offer.

Duke really meant all he said.

But something had altered Maida's sweet gentleness. We may guess as we like; but assuredly it is not for us to speak our guesses when the girl herself, seeming to entrench her resolve behind the fewness of her words, would say so little. In very truth, one short sentence which she spoke at first is the best that we find it possible to give of the more broken, more troubled bits of sentences which came when Duke would again and again pray her to give him a reason.

The rosy, quick colour was fading as she spoke:

"I cannot say a reason, Duke. I am not sure that I exactly know a reason. I am only sure that I cannot say I will be your wife." She was pale when she ended, and her voice had fallen to low sadness.

Duke left The Cedars, and after he was gone it was strange to see how Maida altered entirely. She and Christine changed characters—Maida was alert, gay, lively, always planning and carrying out schemes of summer pleasure.

The first set of visitors who came down declared that Maida's season had done her all the good in the world; it had fired that extreme sweetness and gentleness of hers with a light of electric brilliancy, that made her simply perfect.

Naturally, behind so much that was brilliant, Christine fell into shadow. Still, for a gay girl to be so utterly shadowed argues some dulness of spirit within herself.

Maida was telling herself that her dream of love was over. Never more would she let herself drift into visions of that sort; neither would she cry her secret upon the house-tops, or pose as a love-lorn maiden—no, least of all that!

So here was the history of her gaiety. When the gaiety ceased—for it is too wearying a part to play long—she seemed to become a little careless, a little haughty; but even then, with the flush of some new scene touching her, she was again the brilliant young hostess.

The summer and autumn went slipping by with their pleasant doings.

All the time Duke remained absent. They heard at The Cedars that he had gone to Norway, fishing; but seeing one does not stay in those Northern latitudes when even England begins to cry out against October gales, one might look for him, surely. Not at all. The next that was heard of him was that he was travelling through Russia, was going down to Constantinople, might winter in Egypt.

"And I think Englishmen are like no other nation when they begin to travel." So said Christine when, one morning, she was sitting in Miss Haylesford's room doing some millinery for her. It had been the evening before that Mr. Haylesford had brought down the news of Marmaduke's roving, and the old and young lady were chatting over it. Miss Haylesford was at her writing-table busy with account-books. She talked in an enjoyable, scrappy fashion, but she rarely turned round to look at her companion.

"You French people stay at home more—three legs of mutton in one week, never!—no, my dear, no; and it's odd in Duke just now."

"Just now!—you say 'just now,' Madame. Is it a reason that—"

"H'm," the old lady went on, half to herself. "I've a good mind to see Wallis myself. I'll not be imposed on." Suddenly she turned round in her chair. "You don't mean to say, Christine, that you have been blind? Do you not know what—what we all are expecting?—every day expecting? And he to stay away!"

"No, I do not know, Madame. Is it about Monsieur Marmaduke?" She tweaked her bows, and with her dainty

brown head on one side, was evidently giving the larger half of her mind to her work. Christine had had her amusement, but to her it had been but amusement.

"You never saw it?"

"Monsieur is—ah! that? You mean he will wish to marry Maida! Ah! and it is his father and Maida's father who will not arrange it. But, Madame, you have power. Are you not like Maida's mother?"

"Bless the girl! Am I to sue for him—to tell that Maida is wearing her soul out for him? Ah! you will not repeat that, Mademoiselle—that must not be said of my niece."

"Assuredly no, Madame. My lips are silent. And is it so with Maida? Ah! ma chérie! but I grieve. What is there of sorrow in the world like that?"

"What do you know of such things, Christine?"

The old lady was testy, perhaps, because she was disappointed in the whole mystery of Marmaduke's disappearance, and having once spoken, found a relief in catching up somebody's remark sharply.

"Ah, Madame, I do know!"

"You?—a child like you?"

Christine's quick wits saw the mistake. She laughed brightly.

"No, Madame, not myself. But I remember, ah! I cry when I let myself see Sophie. She was my sister. She was five years older than I am. She had an attachment—ah! there was the misfortune—the attachment. She gave her love, and it was for her a grande passion. My father had arranged a marriage for her that was quite another thing. Ah!"

The girl lifted her hands with a gesture of grief.

"You do not mean to say that they married her to one man when she loved another?" cried Miss Haylesford.

"Oui, Madame, oui." Now could Christine speak English then?

"Thank Heaven I am an Englishwoman! They did that?"

"It is too much grief to talk now!" Christine exclaimed.

"But a father to—"

"A girl must obey her father, Madame. And my father had promised Sophie to M. Simon for his son Etienne so many years—chère Sophie!"

"French custom!" and Miss Haylesford jerked herself with haste back to her writing-table. Excitement had robbed her of her usual dignity. "And your parents

let you come here to England. How could they be sure——?"

"My mother was glad that I come, Madame. There is no fear here. I am safe here. Could a Française make a grande passion for an Englishman?"

"Well, I do not see why not!" with a touch of offence.

"Les messieurs—all—are so kind. They laugh, they say great flatteries, they amuse so much. Ah! yes—but a grande passion is not for that. No, Madame. And I always remember Sophie. I will have no love till my father arranges a marriage for me."

"Very good."

And at this point Christine had evidently worked herself warm, for her face burnt crimson, and one must suppose that she altogether found the subject too much for her, for she shook her lap free of shreds, and springing up, cried, in quite a changed tone, that was a funny mixture of self-satisfaction and demureness:

"Does not Madame like the cap? Is it not charming, now?"

Maida came in from the gardens with a girl who was a neighbour. She carelessly threw her hat on to the table, and herself into a rocking basket-work chair.

"Do just look at her, Miss Haylesford!" the girl cried. "Isn't it all affectation? Making out she cares neither for that nor for anything else!"

"And what specially is it now that you would have her care for?" Here Miss Haylesford's dignity was at its normal height.

"You have not heard?"

"How should she or any one hear, seeing that the mighty decision has only come to our knowledge within the last half-hour?" Maida said carelessly.

"Did I not see that our two fathers were plotting something? And do you think I could allow mine to keep a secret from me? I should think not, indeed!" was Maud Taylor's cry.

"Are we to know the mystery?" asked Miss Haylesford.

"The loveliest notion!" Maud said. She was a neighbouring squire's only daughter, a young lady of the go-ahead type, who was always wishing that Nature had created her a boy. She was the very opposite of Matilda Haylesford, but had been her friend from days of babyhood. "We are to go to the Riviera, perhaps to Italy, perhaps to Madrid, and not come back

till the spring—the two families, I mean. And start at once, too!"

"Well!" Miss Haylesford's breath was almost knocked out of her by the energy of the girl.

"It is more than 'Well'—it is 'Better,' 'Best' of all things. I'd have stayed to lunch, Maida, but we shall be in an awful scramble. I must look and see what clothes I want. Let us have travelling suits alike—all three alike!" and she took Christine in with a nod. "Blue serge with crimson silk facings, blue straw sailor hats with a crimson ribbon round—"

"I've seen that sort of thing a few times," Maida said quietly.

And Maud Taylor carried herself off in a whirl.

CHAPTER V.

THE thing was done. All the winter was passed under the soft luxuriance of Southern skies. One April morning saw carriages before the door of a Sorrento hotel, and under a scorching sun the party of travellers drove round and about the lovely coast road up to, or rather down to Castellamare.

Gorgeous blue was the sky above them; silvery sparkling blue below were the waters of the Bay of Naples, as they splashed and rippled, and flung their diamond spray against the rocks of the tiny coves and bendings of the shore. Vines were in bloom, orange gardens were in bloom and fruitage all at once—ah! what is like an orange warm with the kiss of the spring sun!

At Castellamare the beautiful drive ended, and the travellers took the train. How many trains they took afterwards one stays not to count; northward and northward they ever journeyed away from the sight of Vesuvius, till they came upon the silver streak of the Channel, and steamed across to the white Dover cliffs.

And it was April still when the Haylesfords said "good-bye" to the Taylors, and drove through London streets up to the house in Wexford Gardens. A spluttering, chancy, sunny April shower greeted them, and Maida laughed as the rain dashed in her face.

Verily, she was no love-lorn maiden! The winter among those soft airs had come to the aid of her own will, and she was telling herself that it could have been no "falling in love" which had mastered her with respect to her cousin, Duke Haylesford. When in Rome she had had an offer of marriage from the Captain

Burwood whom we saw at the dance for one moment. He had followed her so far; but, alack for the poor man! Maida would not have him for her husband.

She and Christine agreed that they would by no means hurry into matrimony. Both seemed to have a vague idea that there must be more of duty than of pleasure in that condition of life. In some such sort of way these two girls talked. Methinks girls do now and again talk in this fashion, and then one day there comes—well, we will let time show what comes.

Individually, this is what came some few moments after to Wexford Gardens. Maida was standing by a window looking out at the dancing rain, and rainbow, and sunshine. People hurried by laughing, with their skirts and their umbrellas blown to the four winds of heaven at one and the same moment.

A hansom drove up rapidly and stopped. Out of it sprang Marmaduke Haylesford. Egypt had tanned him darker than ever. He was a well-knit, handsome figure. He ran up the steps, and before she knew it, Maida was shaking hands with him, rosy red, talking fast about only just "coming in from crossing."

"And I crossed yesterday. I thought I was running after you, and you have been running after me."

"Would I do such a thing?" Maida laughed, and gaily tossed her head.

Christine had run upstairs with her arms full; Miss Haylesford and her brother were somewhere amidst the chaos of trunks and portmanteaux. In the room there was that solitude à deux.

And Maida had made her gay disclaimer.

Duke was evidently bent upon achieving some as yet undeclared point.

He caught her up in his impulsive way:

"Never mind, Maida, we've come to the right order now. I am following you by just—five minutes, is it? What idiots we have been! We have just had a year of misery to no purpose."

"Indeed!"—she tried to recover her coolness—"I have by no means been miserable for a year."

"No? Then I have."

And here he fell into a voluble explanation of his follies and his woes.

"And I am to believe that you will never again be foolish or be miserable?" Of course we are not attempting to give the tenderer words, which filled up a space that we are not worthy to enter. Every

story-teller must pass by some closed door, so to speak, or how else should he give his reader credit for possessing imagination? We take up only these gay rallying speeches:

"Is that to be my part?"

"Yes, just believe that. Of course I am foolish, and weak, and unmanly, and——"

"That will do for the present," she cried. "How nice to be the wife of such a man as that! Come, let us find papa, Duke."

"Maida!"

And here the young man must have had an access of folly, for he actually put his arm round Maida's waist and kissed her.

Perhaps, though, this would be a form of folly she could not quarrel with at that minute.

We gave a vague date of "fifteen years ago" for the opening of our story. Now, suppose that the fifteen years have gone by. Of course, it is a good bit more than that time.

It is again spring.

It is the first of May, and some children are playing in The Cedars garden. One is a tall, fair girl, very like some one we have seen. She is so tall and slim, that she looks older than she is; she is only fourteen that May-day; she has a big brother who is fifteen—you see our last date must mean very little, only we like to make much out of it. A dark boy of that same age is talking to her, and this boy wears the curious uniform of a French school.

This boy's name is Paul Clémenceau, and his mother is a woman named Christine, who—we really cannot again push in that vague date of "fifteen years ago!"—was "arranged for" in marriage with a certain M. Paul Clémenceau, a Paris barrister. She was sent for from England and was married, and now and again, she and her husband come over to the Haylesfords on a visit.

By-the-bye, hers is just as happy a marriage as if it had only been one of "falling in love," and not "arranged."

"May," says the boy, "you will come to Paris next year."

"Yes, mother sends me to school there—shall I like it?"

"School?" The boy shrugs his shoulders and throws out his hands. "It is possible. You will have holidays, though."

"Yes, and Madame Clémenceau says I may always come to you."

"Jolly!" The boy knows plenty of English, you see. "And then when you leave your school, I shall be coming here to study law; father says it is good to know English law."

"How old we shall be then!" and May falls to plucking at daisies in a funny, grave way.

"Well, don't you want to get old? I do. We can't be married till we are old, can we?"

"No. I suppose not."

So the children talk.

And the four elders happen to be passing by just then, and overhear. They smile at one another. We wonder whether any one of them thinks of the old belief, which goes to say that, where there has been an affection—no, a stroke of flirtation—in past days, there will you find the thing reproduced in a younger generation.

HIS HEART'S DESIRE.

By ELLEN MULLEY.

PART I.

It was a lovers' quarrel, but there had been no renewal of love. Both were young, and, perhaps, not very wise. As was natural, the woman suffered most. The man, turning his back on the old place and the old life, went out into the wider world and learned, or, it may be, thought that he was learning, to forget. While for the girl he left, there seemed nothing to do but to remember. Then, suddenly there had come into her life once more, one who had never forgotten. All the love had been upon his side, it is true; but, still, he had never despaired. His courage, his self-reliance (which was never self-conceit), and his patience were great—even as his love. "Everything comes to him who waits." He had waited; and now that his opportunity was come, he stepped quietly but boldly in to seize it.

More like an overgrown village than a town—despite its name—Great Wick stood, sheltering itself in the hollow's dip as best it could, between miles of almost untrodden moorland and the wild waste of Northern seas. There it dozed or blinked life away according to the season. For, while winter brought its biting winds and furious storms, spring and summer, waking late it might be, brought with them the sunshine and the blue of Southern skies. But the quiet was being

broken in upon just now, and even its winter's slumbers were never likely to be as deep and undisturbed again. A line which had been planned, and indeed, begun, some three years ago to link its fortunes with the outer world, was being worked upon again; and this it was that brought George Butler, C.E., once more upon the scene; once more he took up his abode in the old house "down street," where Mrs. Pitchforth reigned, and almost fell upon his sunburnt neck to see him back.

Further up the hill the Rectory, grey and weather-beaten, like the church to which it seemed to cling, began to see him again almost daily, as it had done before. The Rector, who was grey and weather-beaten like the house and church, welcomed him eagerly back. It seemed to take ten years off his own bent shoulders only to look at the upright, well-knit figure at his side, and to realise, as he heard him talk, that there actually was another life than this—a life whose interests were not altogether bounded by old Tommy Robson, who would get drunk and go to sleep on a tombstone; or young Mrs. Ord, who seemed to be always coming with a new, and altogether unnecessary, baby to be christened. Poor Mrs. Blair, too, the Rector's wife, would look less careworn over the boy's torn jackets, as she heard the cheery tones with her husband's quiet voice in the Rectory passage; and the boys—six in number—would come darting out from all sorts of places at the sound. The Rector's daughter, who loved them all with such an anxious care—the bent father, the poor tired mother, the noisy, healthy, hungry boys—could not but welcome him too, and be grateful to him. But she knew it was not her gratitude George Butler wanted.

As time went on, Janet Blair began to ask herself if it was not possible she could give him something more. Not, perhaps, the love he wanted, but something in its place, that should content him, and, it might be, bring happiness to herself. For if time had not yet brought forgetfulness, it had brought knowledge. Like the Rector, Janet's eyes were opened, and she knew that there was life—bigger, wider life—beyond her own. And it was this man—no longer a very young one—with the firm upright figure, and resolute yet kindly face, who had seen and done so much, who was her teacher.

The pinch of insufficient means, with its accompanying cares and sordidness,

was known at the Rectory, as in humbler houses in the straggling little town below; but it had not greatly troubled her. It was only for the father and mother she had cared. For herself, the quiet, monotonous life had been sweet enough, for love had touched it. But love, she told herself, had gone out of it for ever; and her life stretched before her terrible in its emptiness. There was one who was telling her almost daily, by looks, deeds, words, that he could help her to live it, and even, in time, bring back to it the old fullness—if she would only let him. And he was waiting for his answer. What if she gave him the answer that he wanted? It was autumn when he had first spoken; he had told her he would wait until the spring—and now the spring had come, and he would wait no longer.

Even from that Northern corner, winter, with its wild storms and lingering snows, had at last disappeared. On moor and upland the fresh grass was springing; the golden glory of the gorse was deepening day by day. Over the glen below, which ran inland from the sea, was the tender green of bursting leaves. The beck, free from its frozen chain, chattered on once more. Everywhere, around, overhead, was the song of birds. The sun shone, a soft breeze stirred the waking flowers, the hushed waves crept up, and with a faint ripple kissed the gleaming sands. And over all the blue sky stretched pure, cloudless; for the spring was come!

And George Butler was waiting still. He came in one morning brisk, smiling; he seemed to bring a whiff of the sea, the moors, the spring itself with him.

"I want the boys," he said to the Rector, who had them round him in the bare room that was called his study. "Jack, here, is to begin with a holiday. I have brought him back."

Jack was the oldest and steadiest of the boys, and George Butler had just taken him into his office in the town. The boys threw down their books with a whoop. Butler himself went to look for Janet. He found her in the little sitting-room by the open window, a basketful of appealing socks before her. From the garden beyond the spring sunshine and a little odorous breeze were calling to her; but she worked steadily on. Presently she looked up and saw him standing, big, broad-shouldered, smiling at her in the doorway. Janet found herself smiling too.

"Put those things away," Butler said shortly, with that little tone of command that was natural to him. "We are going to inaugurate Jack's launch in life with a picnic, and it can't come off without you."

Janet hurried the half-mended socks into the basket. Her hands trembled; a pink flush had come into her face. She was telling herself that the time had come. She was wondering, too, if there would be any cold mutton for sandwiches! Poor Janet!

Butler, I think, knew a little of what was in her mind, as to himself, and also as to the cold mutton. He was looking at her with his keen, kindly eyes. What answer, he asked himself, was she going to make him? He should know before the day was much older. Aloud he said:

"You are not to trouble yourself about food, that is my affair—mine and Jack's. We have already ordered the necessary delicacies. I dare say the boys won't find fault with the weight of the basket."

It did not take Janet many minutes to say good-bye to Mrs. Blair, and to put on the shady, somewhat shabby hat; and presently she was in the garden, where Butler was talking to the Rector, and where the boys were kicking up the pebbles, longing to be off. Janet saw that he had taken her light jacket from its peg in the dark, narrow passage, and had it hanging on his arm. Was he always thinking of her—always caring? What should she say to him—what could she say but "yes!"

Down the hill to the town, where Butler's basket was waiting; over the old, yellow-lichened bridge, under which the beck was hurrying; up that other steep hill-side, which led them to the east cliff's summit—it was by the west the Rectory stood. There was not much need for talking. The way was so steep and rough; the boys danced round the two like so many puppies. Then there was a suitable spot to be found; the cloth to be spread; and the basket made to disgorge its contents. But even hungry boys of the best intentions cannot sit and eat sausage rolls and tarts of solid, though appetising construction, for ever. These young Blairs did all that could be reasonably looked for; but presently—all too soon, as it seemed to one of the lookers-on—there were signs of movement. Irregularly, and perhaps a little reluctantly just at first, the boys strolled off and there remained nothing between

the two thus left silently facing one another, but the fragments of the feast. Butler got up and gave them a disdainful, somewhat ungrateful poke.

"I don't think this adds much to the beauty of the scene," he said. "Shall we stroll a little higher up?"

The soft, green summit of the cliffs went sloping gently upwards. The two went walking side by side, still silent, as if unconscious of each other's presence. Presently they were standing upon the highest point. How fair and peaceful it all was!

"Why could it not always be so?" Janet was asking herself, with a little sigh. "Why should storms and troubles ever come here, or to anyone?"

In the wide-spreading bay the sea shimmered and sparkled in the sun. Here and there in the far, faint blue were the gleam of scarcely-moving sails and the lingering haze from some passing steamer.

Inland stretched the golden glow of gorse, green valleys, waving woods. Nearer home, farm-buildings, time-stained, red-roofed, nestled, half hidden in the pink flush of blossoming orchards. Presently, from quite close at hand, clear, musical, came the first cuckoo's call. Then Butler spoke:

"Hark!" he said. "Do you know what he says—what it all says?" He did not wait for his companion to answer. He knew she understood him. "What are you going to say to me?" he went on. "What answer are you going to give me?"

Janet's heart was beating hard. She could not speak, she could only think. What answer was she going to give him? The keen grey eyes she knew so well were looking steadily into hers. Suddenly between her and them there came a pair of soft, rather sleepy brown ones, that she knew so much better—that she had known almost ever since she could remember. Her own fell; her face took a half-guilty flush.

"Can't you forget all that?" Butler said, who read her thoughts. "Can't you let me help you to forget it?"

"I know how good you are," Janet said weakly.

"I want to be good to you, if you will only let me; to make you happy. If I want a little happiness for myself too, is that so very wonderful?"

"Do you care for me so much?" poor Janet cried, with something like a sob.

Butler caught her hand, and drew her gently to him.

"My dear," he cried, "I care for you so much that——" the strong man's voice was trembling, the resolute face bent down to hers was wistful, tender.

Janet did not draw her hand away; she could not. She could not send this brave, faithful heart from her. It was love that her life wanted, and where could she look to find again such faith, such tenderness? To Butler hope was already coming. Presently his close-shut lips parted with a smile.

"Well?" he said.

Then Janet, who could not help herself, who thought she was going to cry, found herself smiling too.

"That's all right," Butler said, and drew the passive hand he had been holding through his arm.

"But I have not said anything!" the girl cried, still smiling.

"You have said enough," George answered sturdily, and stooped down and kissed the flushing cheeks.

And then it seemed to Janet that it was all settled—settled for her, and that she had had very little to do with it. When the boys after awhile came trooping back, eager for the production of the cake providently reserved for some such moment of starvation, the sun was already dropping to the west. Half an hour later the retreat was sounded. Down the heathery slope, and over the old stone bridge once more; into the straggling street, and past the dozen or so of shops, and the one hotel, "The George and Crown," on the steps of which a young man was standing. He was a young man, with a brown, pleasant face, and soft, brown, rather sleepy eyes. He was smoking a cigar, and appeared to be on the lookout for some one or something. Presently he spied the returning group: the big, broad-shouldered man; the girl; the skipping, chattering boys. When they came opposite to him he raised his hat, his face reddened. Butler lifted his hat.

"There is Frank Archer," he said.

Janet bowed.

The boys rushed over to him. Where did he come from? Why had he been away so long? Was he come back to stay?

"I have been knocking about," the young man said a little awkwardly, "and I am come to stay at the old place."

The old place, as the boys knew, meant the queer, rambling house about a mile away, where Archer's uncle lived, and where he himself had been brought up. And then Frank, too, began asking questions.

"How long had George Butler been back, and was he always about with them like that? He had just heard that he was very friendly at the Rectory."

"He comes every day," Jack said, "or nearly every day. And he has taken me into his office, and I am going to tack C.E. on to my name one of these days, Master Frank."

"Yes," said Frank absently, who had no ambitions, only an income. After this he did not seem inclined to say much more; and presently the young Blairs left him, shouting out their good-nights, as they clattered up the echoing, almost empty street. Janet and Butler were nearly home. Neither seemed inclined for talking, or perhaps it was the way which was too steep. In the Rectory garden the Rector was smoking his solitary pipe. He met them at the gate.

"Come in, Butler."

"Can't, sir, thanks," George said shortly. "When a man plays all day he must work all night—or at least a part of it."

The Rector turned away a little disappointed.

"Was that right?" Janet's companion asked.

"Was what right?"

"Not to come in. Archer may come up with the boys, and I thought, perhaps—you have not met for so long, not since——"

"Not since we said good-bye two years ago," Janet said quietly. "But I don't think he will come to-night."

"He will come to-morrow, then."

"And if he does?" said Janet softly.

Butler had drawn her towards him, and was holding her in his strong embrace. "And if he does? Tell me," he echoed.

Janet hesitated a moment, then looked up into the tender, questioning face. "If he does," she whispered, "I have given you your answer."

PART II.

FRANK ARCHER went up to the Rectory the next morning, for, of course, it was his old playmate and love that he had come to Great Wick to see. He was feeling a little awkward, a little foolish even, and not at all certain as to what he was going to do or say. He found the Rector's daughter in the old-fashioned and rather neglected garden. She was in her favourite seat, under the oldest and crookedest of the apple-trees. The faint sweet smell of the opening

blossoms came to him sweeter and more familiar with every step.

By the time he reached her it seemed to him that he had never been away.

"You are not surprised to see me," he began. "You knew I should come—after last night, I mean."

"Yes, I supposed we should see you," Janet answered. "Papa is busy, as usual, with the boys, but mamma——"

"You know it is not them I have come to see," Frank said reproachfully, his face darkening.

Janet made no answer. She would have given a good deal just then to have seen poor Mrs. Blair's well-worn alpaca gown coming up the straggling, untidy path.

"I knew I should find you here," Frank went on, "and mending one of the boys' jackets, of course."

And then Frank laughed and felt a little more comfortable, and presently found courage to ask if he might not sit down—which meant in the old seat by Janet's side.

As she made room for him he caught her hand:

"You are going to forgive me?" he said gently.

"You must not talk to me like that," Janet said. "And please give me back my hand. How do you think I am to get on with my work?"

"You are not going to forgive me, then?" the young fellow persisted, half incredulous, half wistfully.

"We were both wrong," Janet answered gently. "Let us say no more about it. It is so long ago. Let us forget it."

"It is my fault, I know," cried poor Frank. "I deserve it all. Oh! Janet, don't you think you could care for me again? It has been such a wretched, miserable time." The lad, who was really believing all he said, went on: "I have always meant to come back. Don't tell me it is too late."

The soft brown eyes that she had seemed to see for a moment yesterday were really looking into Janet's now, and there was something very like tears in them. Whatever had come between them he was her old playmate still. What could she say to comfort him? She laid the torn jacket carefully across one of the grey moss-covered boughs.

"Frank," she said, and put her hand gently on one of his; "I am glad to have you back. Nothing can ever undo the old friendship, but nothing can ever make it more than that again. Do you understand,

dear? I, too, have been miserable enough. If I have found some happiness, will you be the one to grudge it me?"

"It is Butler, then?"

Frank Archer's good-looking, sunburnt face was close to his companion's fair one. Her bright, rippling hair almost touched his cheeks; her hand white, slender, still laid on his. The old apple-tree, with its gnarled pink blossom-laden arms, opened itself about the two, and framed them in.

Someone coming up the irregular grass-grown walk stopped a moment to look at the unconscious pair. Then he came on. His footsteps reached them at last, and they turned to look at the intruder. It was George Butler who was approaching. Butler raised his hat, came steadily on with his firm, half-soldierly tread, and then, with a little nod to Archer, stooped gravely down, and laid his bearded lips to Janet's flaming cheeks.

Poor Frank! He got up at once, looking very red indeed.

"I think this is your seat," he said grimly to the new-comer, and with a stiff little bow to his late companion, walked away.

Butler took the vacated seat quite calmly, and then possessed himself of the but just released hand. He felt it trembling as it laid in his. He saw that Janet was looking after the slowly retreating figure with troubled, wistful eyes.

"One must be cruel to be kind sometimes," he said softly. "I have lived so much longer than you, dear, in this criss-cross old world, and it is one of the lessons I have learned."

"Poor Frank!" the girl said, with something like a sigh. "I don't think I could ever be very cruel to him. I have known him for so long—ever since he was quite a little lad."

"And you have never known me anything but a big, rough man?" And Butler pretended to sigh too.

Janet laughed.

"Yes, I can never think of you as anything but a big—no, not rough—brave man; to be a little bit afraid of now and then, perhaps, but always to trust in, to be proud of."

Butler's quiet face, with its firm, almost rugged features, was transformed—a smile played upon his lips, an eager light came to his grey eyes.

"Is that really how you feel?" he cried. "My dear little girl! And I was beginning to be jealous. You will have to be good

to me, you know, Janet, though I am such a big fellow. You see, I have been used to having my own way all my life, and I like it. I am apt to be something of a Grand Turk now and then, when I can't get it; so you are warned. I am going to find the Rector now, and frighten him into giving me his daughter. I wonder what Dick will say!"

Dick was number three, and Janet's special boy. Dear, jealous, twelve-year-old Dick, with the fair, tumbled hair; round, rosy cheeks; angel voice; and oh, such dreadfully active arms and legs. It was his torn jacket over which Janet was smiling now.

"As for Archer," Butler was saying, "we shall be seeing him here again by the evening, and in a day or so he will be here all day long; very miserable, no doubt, but enjoying it all nevertheless."

It happened almost as Butler had said. But not quite. Frank did not appear at the Rectory again that day, but he was there the next, and the next, and, indeed, the next! He was there not only all day, but every day. It was the old time over again. It was the old time to him, that is; to Janet, that could never come again. She certainly was not cruel to him. She treated him as the old friend and play-fellow; as she would have treated Jack if he had been sick and sorry for himself. Perhaps it might have been better for him if she had carried out Butler's sterner code of discipline. But that, as she had confessed, she could not bring herself to do. Butler himself meant to be considerate—to make allowances; but he, too, treated poor ousted Frank very much as he did one of the older boys; took his appearance as a matter of course; greeting him in a free and friendly fashion enough, but putting him aside in a fashion equally frank and friendly when he found him in the way, as he not unfrequently did.

Archer did not return the friendliness. That had been all very well in the old days. Now he preferred to be distantly and frigidly polite; at times, it must be confessed, he was only sulky—of both of which conditions Butler appeared equally unconscious. He was, however, beginning to tell himself that the Rectory had seen about enough of Mr. Archer; that it might be better for all, perhaps, if for the future it saw a little less of him. He was turning over in his mind how he could best convey so much to Janet, when an event occurred which for the time stopped further action.

Business suddenly called Butler away, and kept him away for nearly three weeks. He left more unwillingly than he would have cared to own. Time, and even events, as we all know, can go on very well without us. It is we, sometimes, who suffer.

It was the evening of the day of Butler's return. He made his way at once to his own quarters, where he found Mrs. Pitchforth looking out for him, and the fatted calf, so to speak, ready to be served.

"Glad to see you back, sir," Mrs. Pitchforth remarked for the second time, as, the feast spread, she gave the table-cloth a final and wholly unnecessary pat.

"Thank you, Mrs. P.," Butler made answer, also for the second time.

Mrs. Pitchforth squinted at the unoffending cloth, and then administered another and still more superfluous pat.

"Going up to the Rectory this evening, Mr. Butler, sir, if I may make so free?"

Butler turned in his chair and looked in his landlady's motherly face. "What is it, old woman?"

"Oh! there ain't nothin' amiss, not as I knows on. But there," she went on hurriedly, "I should jest go up if I was you, sir. Miss Janet 'll be lookin' out for you; and there ain't a truer or a loviner' art. But Mr. Frank—well, you see I've known 'em both from quite little 'uns, and he ain't nothun' better than a hot-headed lad even now. And—well it ain't no use beating about the bush, and it's time you was back, and that's the truth."

Honest Mrs. Pitchforth had "done" for George Butler ever since he had first come to Great Wick, and to her he was the best and most wonderful of gentlemen. Butler, on his part, had a great respect and even admiration for his landlady. He was accustomed to her advice and interference in his affairs; it was only a part of her care of him, and he took it all as a matter of course.

"Well, Mrs. P.," he now said, when she had come to a stop, "if you have quite finished, you can retire."

"Tain't nothun' to laugh at, sir!"

"No," Butler said, "but I can't cry with you in the room."

Then Mrs. Pitchforth took her departure. George Butler did not go up to the Rectory that night, as he had certainly intended. He sat smoking his pipe in Mrs. Pitchforth's dim, low-ceilinged room instead.

Smoking and thinking. Thinking of all that had happened in the past few weeks,

of Mrs. Pitchforth's words, and telling himself that he would go to Janet the first thing in the morning. But when morning came, the first thing he did was to look in at the office close by. He found Jack already there with the place to himself, and hard at work drawing engines of unheard-of power all over a sheet of office blotting-paper.

"Hullo!" Jack cried, and jumped down from his high stool.

"Well, Jack! how goes it?"

"Oh, all right—down here, that is," Jack corrected himself.

"What do you mean?" asked Butler, sharply.

"Eh! oh! well up there, you know," and Jack gave his head a little jerk.

"What about up there, can't you speak out?"

"Yes, I can," said Jack unexpectedly, "and it's about time someone did. I—in fact I thought of writing to you," and Jack put his hands in his pockets, and drew himself up in a very business-like way indeed.

Butler, who was standing with his back to the room looking out of the window, made no answer.

"It is that fellow, Archer," Jack went on, "not but what I like Frank; but it's sickening, that's what it is! What's he always moping about our place for, so that one can't get a word with one's own sister?"

Still George Butler made no answer.

"Are you going up now, sir?"

Butler turned. "No," he said slowly. "I am going up to Bowlby to see how the work gets on." Then the door swung to after him, and Jack went thoughtfully back to his high stool and his engines.

Butler found everything going on satisfactorily at Bowlby, where the new line was being made. By two o'clock his inspection was finished, and he was ready to start for home. Then someone unexpectedly stayed him, and it was three o'clock before he was set at liberty. He had come over the cliffs from Great Wick, leaving the longer and not always available route by the sands for his return. And now as he set his face towards home, time and tide, the unlooked-for delay, had alike passed from Butler's mind.

He was busy with his own affairs. Mrs. Pitchforth's motherly warning, Jack's bluntly expressed dissatisfaction, what did they mean? Had he still been blind—too confident in himself? What if this young

girl's heart had never been really his? And what, ah! what, if meaning to be true, the old love, and latterly the return of the old life, had been too strong for her? If that were so—and it came upon him suddenly now with a horrible force that it was so—there remained only one thing to be done. He was a man given to the having of his own way, even to the cutting of it through the untrodden and almost unknown wilds of far-away continents, and he liked it, as he had said. But not to the having it at the cost of those he loved. "His heart's desire" meant something more to him than that. It was not Janet Blair only he had set his heart upon winning, it was her heart he had meant to win; her happiness he had meant to make his own. If he had failed in that, he had failed in all. He had asked for bread—what if it were a stone that had been given him? Suddenly something, the cry of a sea-bird, the fall of loose shale from the cliff's face, perhaps, startled him, and brought him to himself. He looked around him. He was walking much nearer the cliff's foot than he had any idea of, and close upon his other hand—the sea! Wave upon wave the tide was rushing in, sweeping itself fiercely back, only to spring with a hungrier roar upon the fast lessening sands. Its sullen thunder was in Butler's suddenly awakened ears plainly enough now. For a moment even his brave heart stood still. He gave one look behind him. The last point that he had passed in the curving bay, lay hidden in a wild swirl of waters. On his left rose the tall cliffs, straight and sheer, with scarce foothold for a bird. At his right was the hurrying sea—wide, desolate, with not a sail in sight. His one chance of escape lay before him, and in a quarter of an hour or less, even that would be lost to him. Butler tore off coat and waistcoat, and prepared himself to run. It was a race between himself and death, and he knew it. He had lessened the distance by some hundred yards, when there came a cry, not a sea-bird's this time, not his fancy merely, for it came again—faint, but unmistakeable. It was his own name, Butler heard. He stayed his steps as though he had been shot. At the cliff's foot, almost at his own, half sitting, half lying, as if he had fallen there, was the man he had been thinking of but a few moments since—Frank Archer!

"Good Heaven! man," Butler panted, "what are you doing here? Get up, lad, for your life!"

"I can't," Archer groaned. "I have

broken my ankle, I think—slipped on the rocks." His face was white and drawn, he looked as if he were going to faint.

The elder man stood looking round him for one moment—no living thing in sight! The next he was down on his knees by his companion, his back towards him.

"Put your arms round my neck," he said quietly.

"No," cried Frank sharply, the colour rushing back into his face, although the other could not see it. "Save yourself, Butler, you can. I ought never to have called you back. Say good-bye, old fellow, and—and if I have not made myself very pleasant lately——"

"You're making yourself a deal more unpleasant now, and as time is short and I have no particular fancy for being drowned"—and without waiting to complete his sentence, Butler had got Archer, passive now, upon his back, and was running for the lives of two. Running his very hardest—death at his side keeping up with him step for step. Nearer and nearer the hungry waves, until at last they bathed them in their spray—the distant point that lay between them and safety distant still. Bit by bit the line of rocks that formed the barrier of the bay was swallowed up and lost, and still on with straining eyes and short, sharp-drawn breaths, Butler panted beneath his burden. There was no word between them. Nearer and nearer still—the awful sea about their very feet now. Nearer, a little nearer, the distant point. But what of that? Dear Heaven! what of that with all hope gone—lost with the last dark glistening head of rock—where for a moment the sunshine played—beneath the swirling waters!

Then, for the first time, Butler stopped. Archer slipped from his shoulders to the wet sands and sat, his face covered with his hands. Butler stood stiff, upright, no sign upon his rugged face; his arms crossed upon his still heaving breast. And then—then into the broad sunshine round the distant point, there crept a red-brown sail.

PART III.

In the Rectory garden Janet was waiting for her lover. The afternoon was wearing into evening and still he did not come. Janet went over to the low, broken-down old wall from which beyond the fields and cliffs a wide view stretched of heaving sea, darkening now in the fading light. She knew that he was back again,

for Jack had told her; and presently here was Jack himself. He was looking very hot and excited. He could not speak; he stood for a moment scarcely able to draw his breath. The girl put out a hand and caught him by the shoulder.

"What is it?" she cried in a frightened whisper. "Why don't you speak to me, Jack?"

"It's Butler and Frank," gasped Jack. "They've been caught in Deadman's Bay, and Frank—don't, Janet! Janet! they're all right, I tell you," cried poor, scared Jack.

"Go on," said Janet hoarsely.

"Oh yes, I'll go on; but you scared me going white like that, and Butler particularly said I was not to frighten you."

Janet gave a faint smile.

"That's right," said the boy. "Here, lean against the wall."

And then Jack told his story.

"Oh, Janet!" he cried, his young eyes flashing, "what a brick he is! Frank says he believes he might have saved himself at the very last, if he only would have left him. And fancy old half-seas-over Robson coming along in the very nick of time. He may go to sleep on all the tombstones at once if he likes after this." The next moment Jack threw up his hat with a shout. Butler was coming up the path. His face was set and grave. He gave a quick, keen look from Jack to Janet—Janet, whose face had gone white again—whose lips were trembling.

"You have been frightening her," he said sharply.

"I didn't mean to," Jack cried. "I told her you were safe—you and Archer."

"Ah, yes, Archer!"

There was something that sounded like a catch in Butler's breath. He was looking at Janet still, frightening her more than Jack had done. Jack looked a little frightened, too. He knew something of what was amiss. Perhaps he had better not have spoken as he did this morning after all. And presently, feeling not a little guilty, Jack took himself away. Butler's heart was beating in great heavy throbs. Janet had turned from him, and was gazing with unseeing eyes over the sleeping fields, with the darkening sea beyond. Archer's name; Butler's voice; his white, set face had told her all. She was feeling crushed, blinded, helpless. Suddenly, the new sweet life

was gone, and there was nothing left for her to do.

Had the quiet dead close by ever felt like that! she wondered. How peaceful they were now! How peaceful it all was! It was only these two human hearts that throbbed hot, restless, passionate; eager for happiness; crying out in the silence, a little blindly, perhaps, against life, its pain, its disappointments. And still the quiet heavens looked down unheeding of it all. Overhead the stars were already twinkling; behind some distant woods the moon had risen. Not the rustle of a wing in bush or hedge. No sound save the faint lap and ripple of the falling tide. It was Butler's voice that broke the silence.

"Janet," he said gently, "you do not think that I am here to blame you. It is I that have to be forgiven. I ought to have known, to have seen, as others did. But I was wanting my own way, you see, dear. I warned you of it on the day when——"

Something in the memory of that day, something in the pretty, girlish figure standing a little removed from him; a strange, almost desolate look, drew him a step nearer.

"Janet, my love, my darling, speak to me! Must I go? Is it to be 'good-bye, or do' you bid me stay? Only one word, my dear, to stay or go?"

At his passionate cry the young girl turned.

"Not that, not that!" she cried, and put out soft, entreating hands.

Butler caught them. A moment more and she was sobbing, laughing, on his breast.

Someone was coming up the moonlit path; someone singing in a clear, boyish treble:

"And He shall gi-ive thee thy hear-art's desire."

Butler had heard fair-haired Dick sing it in the old church only three weeks ago. It was Dick's young voice that was singing it now; and Dick himself was presently calling to the two.

"Coming!" Butler cried.

And then unconscious Dick went sauntering back in the moonlight. "And He shall give thee thy heart's desire," went the fresh young voice once more, and presently was lost. But its echoes floated on, not only on the quiet night, but through the happy, hopeful years that smiled beyond it.

"UN BAL DE MICARÊME."

By C. G. FURLEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE MARQUIS ALAIN DE LA TRÉMOUILLE was a man of liberal principles. The descendant of one of the oldest houses in France, whose members had intermarried with the Condés and Bourbons, and had thought it no great honour to call the King their cousin, he ought to have been a Legitimist. He was—anything: Orleanist, Republican, Imperialist, Republican again. He served every party that would give him a portfolio and a pension, in return for the ornamental use of his ancient title. He has been Minister of State for almost everything; and as he was impartially ignorant of all the subjects entrusted to him, it cannot be said that he failed more conspicuously in one capacity than another. Finally, he took to diplomacy, and was appointed Ambassador to a South American State, where he distinguished himself greatly, being the very pink of courtesy, and a Past Master in the art of evasion.

It was while he was Minister of Fine Arts that I made his acquaintance. He professed to think it his official duty to patronise journalism, and so lavished a great deal of courtesy on René Michonneau, and somewhat less on me, Georges Froidevaux, his companion on the staff of the "Journal de Tout le Monde." As "Everybody's Journal" was not, unfortunately, so well supported by everybody as its proprietors could have desired, I was both surprised and flattered by the Minister's civility, till Michonneau explained the cause of it according to his cynical views of men and their motives.

"Monsieur de la Trémouille," said he, "is, like many official democrats, a despot in private life. He thinks that in his Château, and for twenty miles around, he should rule as supreme as his ancestors did in the Middle Ages. That might be possible, if he owned the land his fathers then possessed; but being a gambler, and the descendant of three generations of gamblers, very little of it is left to him; and he hates those who have bought any portion of his domain as heartily as if they had stolen it. My father, who was steward to the last Marquis, was foolish enough to purchase some land nearly adjoining the Castle, and thereby incur the wrath of

M. de la Trémouille, who more than hinted that he had gained the means of acquiring an estate by cheating his employer. By way of retort, my father closed a path that led from the Château to the nearest town, directly across his property. The Marquis claimed a right of way, and so they raised one of those great quarrels over little matters, which often form the sole excitement in the monotonous lives of country people. My father likes quarrelling; he enjoys it; it braces his nerves. He had dissensions not only with the Marquis, but with all his neighbours, till, at last, there was no one left to fight with; then, finally, he quarrelled with me. I left his house, came to Paris, became a journalist, and after undergoing the requisite initiation in the art of starving, began to earn my living. Here I met the Marquis de la Trémouille, who took me up, invited me to his house, made much of me—not because he liked me, or cared for literature, but because he hated my father, and knew me to be on bad terms with him. That is the real foundation of his friendship for me; picture to yourself how highly I value it."

"Yet you profess to care for it," I said. "You frequent the Hôtel Trémouille; you go to his official receptions; you talk in your most brilliant style to his uninteresting guests; you even echo his opinions—expressing them better than he can himself—in the journal. What does that mean?"

Michonneau smiled. "Ah, that's different," he answered; "there are reasons, very good reasons. Are you so dull that you cannot comprehend them?"

I did comprehend. My friend's "reasons" were comprised in one personality—that of Charlotte de la Trémouille, the Marquis's beautiful daughter.

"René, you are mad!" I exclaimed. "To let yourself love Mademoiselle de la Trémouille is the height of folly. You are only laying up sorrow for yourself, and, perhaps, for her also. You do not imagine that her father would let her marry you—a bourgeois, a Bohemian, a journalist!"

"I do not imagine it. I know he would forbid such a thing in that grand manner which is the only good quality the ancien régime has transmitted to him; but not because I am all that you say. No; I can picture him pronouncing a paternal benediction on me in the same charming style; and speaking eloquently of the destruction

of caste prejudices; the redemption of errant man through that beautiful institution, the domestic hearth, and the union of rank and letters—as all exemplified in my marriage with his daughter—if I were rich enough. My poverty is my sole, but sufficient demerit. For M. le Marquis is liberal in other things than politics. He spent his own inheritance with the most reckless liberality, then showed his superiority to racial distinctions by bestowing his coronet on Mademoiselle Suzanne Levi, whose pedigree is doubtless longer than his own, but whose income was largely derived from a successful gambling establishment. It was a large income, but not enough for the Marquis, who finally sold his claim to it for an immense sum. This, too, he has spent, and is again in debt. He has but one possession left to sell—his daughter—and she must go to the man who can pay most for her."

"You are aware of all this," I cried, when he paused in his scornful characterisation of the Marquis, "and yet, knowing that your passion is hopeless, you take every opportunity of indulging and increasing it!"

"What does that matter?" he retorted, dropping his listless tone and speaking with all the intensity of the South from which he came. "Does one ask oneself, when one begins to love a woman, if one has any chance of marrying? You may; I do not. I know that to be near her is happiness, to be apart from her is misery; I know that I would sacrifice anything, everything, to be loved by her again. I take my joy while I can get it; I seize it the more eagerly because I know it can last but a short time; and I trust the future and its chances to Providence."

"And if Mademoiselle de la Trémouille loves you, how will it affect her? Is it fair to win a woman's love if you can only break her heart by it? You admit that you cannot marry her. Women of her station and beauty are not permitted to 'coiffer Sainte Catherine.' The result will be that, while her heart is yours, she will become the wife of some man to whom she is, at best, indifferent."

"Women of her beauty and station, mon ami, are not permitted to marry for love. No one will know how indifferent she is to him better than her husband. That is not my affair, and I do not see why I should sacrifice the little happiness I can now secure for the sake of a personage who is still in the mists of futurity, and whom,

when he appears, I shall detest with all my heart."

"Do you think M. de la Trémouille knows of your passion for Mademoiselle Charlotte?" I asked after a pause, giving up my useless contention.

"Who knows?" answered Michonneau, carelessly. "Who can tell what the Marquis knows? His skill in concealing his knowledge is unsurpassed, even by his skill in concealing his ignorance. If he is conscious of the love between us—for I will admit to you that Charlotte does not forbid my affection—he does not yet think it necessary to check it, not having yet selected his daughter's husband. Meanwhile I am of use to him in publishing opinions in harmony with his own—not to speak of giving him one or two ideas on the subject he is supposed to manage—and my affection for Mademoiselle secures my allegiance."

"Do you think, then, that he plays with his daughter's heart for his own ends?"

"Not he! M. le Marquis plays with nothing; he makes use of all things, his daughter included. When she can be employed to better purpose than is served by keeping a poor scribbler in his train, I shall be dismissed in some unforeseen manner, the nature of which I trust entirely to M. de la Trémouille's well-known ingenuity."

Yet I think René was unprepared for the disagreeable form that ingenuity was to take.

In the first place there appeared at the Hotel Trémouille a certain Vicomte de Boisjoly, who, it soon appeared, sought the hand of Mademoiselle Charlotte. He was as nearly a nobody as a man with a title could be, for his father had begun life as Jean Jolibois, bricklayer, and did not display, either in looks or manner, any striking illustration of the dignity of labour. But the bricklayer had become a contractor, had made millions, and by judiciously transposing the syllables of his family name, had made it fit to bear with seemliness the title his wealth purchased for him. His son, the Vicomte Alfred, was a very fine specimen of unmanly manhood, undersized, insignificant, cowardly, incapable of even an amusement that made any strain on courage and endurance; yet he was thought to be a fitting husband for proud Charlotte de la Trémouille, with the beauty she had inherited from a long line of noble ancestors enriched by her mother's Oriental grace. She scorned Boisjoly, and swore to René (as he told me) that she would never yield to her father's commands; and it is true

that the Marquis was not able to announce—to his creditors and others—the betrothal that was to save him from ruin, as soon as he desired.

"If this were any other country than France I would carry her off and make her mine," cried Michonneau, in passionate despair; "but our laws are made to suit the tyranny of such parents as M. de la Trémouille, and I cannot marry her without her father's consent."

He was in a very exasperated mood, my poor René, maddened with the thought of the woman he loved being given to a man she hated. All the cynical coolness with which he had intended to view the spectacle had vanished, and his anger, which was ready to display itself in irritation against anyone, made him an easy tool in the Marquis's skilful hands.

At this time the Government was being much abused for its foreign policy, which some condemned as rash, and others as timorous. At one of M. de la Trémouille's official receptions, René was defending this, not perhaps from conviction but from a wish to please his host, who presumably thought the policy wise and right. The Marquis stood listening with a pleasant smile, as those around heard in silence, if not with conviction, Michonneau's passionate, and, indeed, clever arguments; but when these were finished, he turned to one of the bystanders and said:

"And you, M. Énault, what do you think of all this?"

I thought—it might be only fancy—that a glance expressing a secret understanding passed between our host and Énault, the editor of "L'Avenir," as he replied in a slow, drawing accent, which I knew to be enough of itself to annoy my friend:

"With all deference to M. le Marquis, who doubtless approves the action of his colleagues, I consider the policy which expends millions of francs on arms which may never be used, to be foolish and imprudent; and I hold that everyone who expresses approval of it must be either a traitor to the true interests of his country, or ignorant what these are."

"Monsieur," cried René, "I approve of the policy."

Énault shrugged his shoulders.

"You have already made that clear," he answered. "I can only say—so much the worse for you, and, perhaps also, so much the worse for the Government."

This slight on his literary capacity

touched René to the quick. He was intensely sensitive; intensely ambitious.

"You insult me!" he exclaimed.

"Do you take the truth as an insult?" returned the other, with a sneer.

The fact was that Énault was jealous of my friend, who was rapidly advancing to the first rank of journalism; and he was well content to quarrel with him on his own account, even if he had not obliged the Minister by doing so.

To Énault's last speech there could be but one sequel. A meeting was arranged and they fought. The editor of "L'Avenir" was one of the best shots in Paris. Doubtless the Marquis expected that Michonneau, now become an incumbrance to him, would fall; and, even if he were not killed, would be laid aside for a sufficiently long time to enable him to marry his daughter to the Vicomte de Boisjoly. The result, however,

was very different. Énault missed; while René, nervous, excited, and unskilled in the use of the pistol though he was, sent a ball through his opponent's heart.

This accident, however, played M. de la Trémouille's game as well as any other; and I do not suppose that a man of his rank, the inheritor of mediæval ideas on the value of human life in creatures of a lower caste, cared much which mere journalist was killed to suit his convenience. For in any case Michonneau was got rid of. Duelling was to be severely punished in our model new Republic; and we had to make haste in smuggling the victor over the Belgian frontier, in order to save him from at least a long term of imprisonment.

He still worked for the journal, and I wrote to him regularly; but I carefully abstained from speaking of Mademoiselle de la Trémouille, hoping that the miserable affair in which he had just been concerned would in some degree have effaced this foolish passion from his mind. It appeared to have done so, for Michonneau made no enquiry after the Minister or any of his connections.

The duel had taken place in early winter. At the beginning of March it was evident that it had played its part in the schemes of the Marquis; the betrothal of Mademoiselle Charlotte to the Vicomte de Boisjoly was announced to the world. The wedding was to take place at Easter. Meanwhile the poor little Vicomte might be seen everywhere in attendance on his bride and her parents, of whom he seemed to be more or less afraid, though in other society of a more ignoble kind, he was confident

and presuming enough. Mademoiselle de la Trémouille looked prouder than ever, and more beautiful also; but the character of her beauty was changed. All the vivacity of girlhood was gone from it; one would have said even that the bloom of youth had disappeared from her complexion; she looked already like a mature woman of the world. And yet her pride covered only a bitterness that well-nigh approached humility, as I found on the occasion when I ventured to offer her my congratulations.

She listened in silence to my civil phrases, while her great dark eyes looked steadily into mine, as if to decipher how much truth lay beneath my words. How she read me I cannot say; but when I had finished my commonplace remarks, and was turning away, she stopped me, and with lips that trembled, forced herself to say a few words:

"Understand, M. Froidevaux—for I wish—you—to know the truth—that my father's honour is involved in my marriage. He has entrusted the preservation of it to me, and I must not prove unequal to the task."

I knew the message was meant for another than myself, and therefore dared to answer it frankly.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "I hold that a man has no claim to possess honour, who cannot keep it intact without aid from another, even his own child."

She flushed slightly, and I thought she sighed. "You are right, perhaps; but a child cannot say that to a parent, must not even think it of him."

I hesitated about forwarding this message to Michonneau, and finally decided to suppress it. But I could not suppress the newspapers, which conveyed to my friend all he needed to know—that Charlotte was about to be married. True, he had foreseen this marriage, had even prophesied his own dismissal; but it was none the less a shock, when his predictions were so speedily fulfilled. I did indeed hope that he had taken it calmly, for in his letters to me he made no mention of it; but I was soon to be undeceived.

I was in the Bois one day, watching the passers-by languidly, while I meditated an article for next week's issue of "Le Journal de Tout le Monde," when I saw approaching a riding-party of three persons—Mademoiselle de la Trémouille, accompanied by her father and her lover. They were going at a walking pace, so that I could observe them closely. The Marquis looked at

those around and occasionally bowed to an acquaintance with a delicious air of profound and yet benevolent self-satisfaction; his daughter, though she held her reins loosely and gazed absently in front of her, sat haughtily upright; while Boisjoly started nervously at every motion of his horse's head, and seemed painfully conscious of the insecurity of his position.

Suddenly, when they were about half a dozen yards from me, I saw Charlotte start and turn pale. She gave her horse a hasty cut with the whip, and in a moment had passed me like a flash of lightning, while her father hastened to overtake her, and Boisjoly, whose horse had broken sympathetically into a canter, joggled unsteadily behind. Turning to the point where the change in the girl's demeanour had taken place, I saw René Michonneau.

He was standing behind a group of people, and was half hidden also by a tree; but I could see his face, turned eagerly in the direction in which the woman he loved was disappearing, and on it I read an intense yearning, mingled with a sad reproach, and yet more pitiful triumph. I hurried up to him.

"René, what are you doing here?" I exclaimed. "It is madness to run such a risk!"

He took no notice of my question, though he seemed to feel some pleasure at meeting me, and kept my hand clasped in a convulsive pressure.

"Is it true?" he demanded.

"What are you speaking of?" I asked in return.

"Is it true that she is to marry this Boisjoly, this piece of gilded mud? Is he the idol to which Charlotte is to be sacrificed?"

"Say rather that he is the priest by whom the sacrifice is performed. The victim is offered up to her father's pride, poverty, and selfishness. But why do you take it so bitterly? You knew long ago that this must be; you yourself foretold it."

"Yes, but I did not, could not, foretell how intolerable it would be to me. And to her too! She seemed numbed with misery when she passed me; and when she caught a glimpse of my face, how pale she grew! It is a sin that she should be sacrificed! I will see her again. I will beseech her to come to me."

"Do not speak so loudly!" I entreated; "do not attract attention! If you are seen and recognised, you know what the

result must be. And do not try to see Mademoiselle de la Trémouille. She is resigned to her fate; she feels that duty demands of her this sacrifice of herself. You can offer her no better destiny than that which lies before her. Without her father's consent—unattainable, as you know—she cannot be your wife. Leave her then to such peace as she can find. Do not make her fate harder than it needs be."

"I must see her—I will see her," he repeated with set teeth. "But do not fear that I will compromise you by letting anyone see me in your society. Take no thought of me. I must go my own way at any risk. You shall not see me again till the object for which I have come to Paris is attained."

And before I had time to reply, he had left me, and was hidden by the shifting groups of loungers.

CHAPTER II.

I DID not see Michonneau, as I had expected to do, in any of the haunts we journalists affect, although there, among friends and fellow-workers, he would have been safe from the hands of the law. Indeed, he ran little risk if the Marquis de la Trémouille had not seen him when his daughter did; but there was no doubt that, if the Minister had recognised him, he would use any means, fair or foul, to keep him out of the way till Charlotte's marriage was accomplished.

I worried myself thinking of the complications my friend's presence might bring about at this juncture; and I could foresee nothing but trouble to himself, and possibly to the unfortunate girl as well. I think it was my discomposure that made me so ready to indulge just then in dissipations, which, as a rule, I detested. The insoluble conundrum of Michonneau's future troubled me so persistently, when I was not occupied with my work, that I was glad to take refuge from it in any place where I could find noise, light, and colour. I was thankful for the festival of *Mi-Carême*, which came just then to break the chastened gloom of a Parisian Lent, or, at least to give special excuse for some outburst of Bohemian jollity.

So, one night I went to a masked ball. I left the peace of the spring night, the silence in which, out in the half-built suburbs where I lived, one seemed almost to hear the trees bursting into bud and leaf

through their hard and gnarled branches, and to inhale, as in a dream of the country, the faint perfume of some brave violet that had not yet fled from the approach of man. I left these to listen to the harsh clanging of dance-music, and the still worse discordance of soulless, mirthless laughter; for the glare of gas, so yellow as to hide the lack of freshness in the gaudy, farcical costumes, and in the faces—not one of them bright or innocent-looking, though many of them were young—which smiled, and leered, and frowned, now beneath a silken mask, and again, hidden by only the almost equally complete protection of paint and powder and natural duplicity. I hated the scene—will you believe this of a Parisian journalist?—though I was present at it of my own free will.

Nevertheless it was, after its fashion, bright and gay enough. I let my imagination wander with my eyes, and taking scraps of overheard conversation for a groundwork, made a history for each bright-clothed figure that passed me.

Take, for example, that clown and the columbine who leant on his arm. I felt his figure to be dimly familiar. I fancied that could I see him in some other dress than the scarlet and white of a Pierrot, and undisguised by the white paint and vermilion triangles on his face, I should know him for an acquaintance; but in his masquerade costume I failed to recognise him. His companion was a pretty, though bold-looking girl, who wore no mask to hide a face that was apparently well known to many present.

The two paused for a minute in a whirling galop, and stopped to rest near the corner where I was standing.

"I suppose," said the girl, "that this will be your last dance at a *Mi-Carême* bal costumé, Monsieur. By this time next year you will be a staid husband, who will frown at the memory of these follies of past days."

"Not I, ma belle. It is not written in the marriage service that a man should be triste for the rest of his days. To marry is a duty to society, and one always takes such duties lightly. To be happy is a duty to oneself, and is therefore to be strictly performed. I shall not fail in it."

"Ah! the future Madame la Vicomtesse will have a voice in deciding wherein your happiness shall lie."

"Not much. Mademoiselle de la Trémouille seeks neither her own happiness nor mine in becoming my wife, and will,

therefore, make no effort to control my search for it after I am her husband."

The clue to the identity of the Pierrot, which I had hitherto failed to catch, was given me by this last remark. It was Boisjoly.

"So you say now," answered his companion, hastily; "but believe me, after she is married, a woman claims rights even while she refuses privileges. Your wife may do nothing to reconcile you to married life; but, nevertheless, she will object to your continuing the habits of your bachelor life, and you will have to submit to her wishes."

"You are wrong. I promise you that the event will prove it. I will wager a diamond brooch against the knot of ribbons on your shoulder that next year, at a Mi-Carême ball, I shall be as ready as I am to-night to lead the cotillon with you. Will you take the wager?"

"Not unless the stakes are placed in my hands at once," returned the girl with a light laugh. "But do not let us stand still any longer. The music gets quicker as the end of the dance approaches. We have time for one more turn before it stops."

They whirled away from my sight, and I tried to put them from my memory also. In a moment I succeeded, for my eye fell on a figure dressed as a brigand—a Fra Diavolo with long cloak, peaked broad-brimmed hat, and a mask that did more than pretend to conceal the face below. But I knew the man too well not to recognise who it was that was lounging about the ball-room, keeping, in all his wanderings, his eyes steadily fixed on the entrance.

I went up to him hastily. "Réné," I exclaimed in a troubled whisper, "why are you here? Do you not know what a risk you run?"

"Froidevaux, is it you?" he answered, with some irritation in his tone. "I thought you were too grave to visit such a scene. But since I have met you I will ask your help, for, as you will believe, I do not wish to show myself more than is necessary. Keep near the door and watch for a tall lady in a blue domino. When she comes address her—she will know your voice, and she is aware that you are my friend—and bring her to me. I shall be in the alcove at the end of the salle."

"Do you mean that Mademoiselle—?"

"Hush! do not mention her name here. Yes, she has promised to meet me once

more; and we are safer from detection here than in the most deserted spot in Paris. There is no solitude like that of a crowd."

I doubted this last proposition, but I had no opportunity of disputing it, for Michonneau turned and left me, and I had no alternative but to repair to the post he assigned to me. I removed my mask, having no reason of my own to fear recognition, and so simplified the task of winning the confidence of Mademoiselle de la Trémouille when at last she appeared.

I felt her hand tremble as it lay on my arm, while I led her up the room. It was not strange that she should be afraid. It was long past midnight, and this ball was a place which women of her station are not supposed to visit. Her parents and her betrothed believed her to be asleep in her own chamber, while she was stealing out masked and disguised to meet a forbidden lover. Michonneau saw her agitation and was angered by it—everything angered him now, poor fellow!

"You seem distressed, Mademoiselle," he said, as he took her hand.

"Can you wonder?" she answered. "It is the height of folly in me to come here to meet you."

"Yet it is not the first—no, nor the tenth time, that you have left your father's house after nightfall to keep a rendezvous with me."

"No, but formerly it was different. I endangered no one but myself, and I even wished sometimes that I could be discovered, for then my father would have felt compelled to give me to you. But now! You know how I am placed, I am within a few weeks of my marriage—a marriage which is forced upon me, yet from which I dare not wish to escape. On its taking place my father's honour and credit depend. Any chance might bring the knowledge of what I have ventured to-night to the ears of M. de Boisjoly. Then what could I expect but that he would refuse to make me his wife, as holding me unfit to keep his name above scandal. And if he explained his reasons—Ah!"

She stopped abruptly, and barely suppressed a scream, for Boisjoly, passing by the alcove, had glanced at its occupants, and disentangling himself from the clinging grasp of his columbine, had come forward and laid his hand on the blue domino's arm.

"Mademoiselle de la Trémouille, do I

see you here—you?" he asked in a low but furious voice.

She trembled so that she could scarcely speak.

"You recognise me?" she faltered.

"Yes," he replied. "Your disguise is admirable, and sufficient for the world in general; but the man who meant to marry you in a fortnight is, as he ought to be, able to recognise you under any mask—even that of ingénue, which you have hitherto worn."

Michonneau interposed. "Whatever relation this lady may bear to you in future, remember that she is for the moment under my protection, and that whoever fails to address her with respect must answer for it to me."

"I have no doubt," said Boisjoly, "that I shall be better able to reply to your demands than you will be to answer mine."

"The means of settling all questions is easily obtained, nor need we waste much time in argument."

"Oh! what do you mean?" cried the frightened girl.

"Mademoiselle, this is not a place for you," said her betrothed, letting the question pass; "allow me to conduct you to your carriage."

Again Michonneau interposed with his now characteristic needless petulance.

"As Mademoiselle came here to meet me and not M. de Boisjoly, I claim the privilege of being her escort."

Charlotte gazed despairingly from one to the other. As the rivals had already quite sufficient cause of quarrel to satisfy belligerent souls, I thought I might venture to make some attempt at calming this petty difference, and offered my services for the trivial task.

Mademoiselle de la Trémouille accepted my offered arm, and turned from René without farewell. To Boisjoly, she said in a trembling voice: "My father and mother know nothing of this folly of mine. If it be possible, spare them."

The Vicomte bowed. "I trust to arrange this affair in such a manner as to incommodate neither you nor your family. In any case you may be sure that I know how to respect the honour of a noble name."

She must have known that any possible "arrangement" must involve danger to her lover, yet she walked away without even a glance at the man whom love for her had brought to such grievous peril. She had risked much for Michonneau, but she cared most for herself after all.

It is true, however, that she asked me in a whisper, as I placed her in one of the fiacres that were waiting outside, "Must they fight?"

"I fear it cannot be prevented."

"Try to do so," she implored. "Beseech them, for my sake, to part in peace."

I promised to comply with her request, though I knew it to be hopeless; and indeed when I returned to the ball-room neither René nor Boisjoly was to be seen. I looked around for them, but vainly, and though I asked the columbine, who had been Boisjoly's partner, if she knew where he had gone, she could give me no information.

M. le Pierrot had left her very abruptly, very rudely; she had no further interest in him. And she added, with a glance that was meant to be bewitching, "As both our companions seem to have deserted us, Monsieur, shall we not console each other?"

I turned away impatiently and left the place, troubled and irritated in mind. Nothing seemed left for me but to go home, for I knew not where to seek the rival lovers, and I wholly despaired of influencing either of them, even if I could find them.

I walked along, gloomily revolving the possible issue of Michonneau's mad love, until, as the night faded into grey, and the spring morning dawned chill and draped in mist, the special question in my mind seemed to lose its sharpness of outline, and blend vaguely with the cloud of sorrow and wrong, which I felt to be overhanging the great sleeping city. I lived, as I have said, in one of the unfinished suburbs—a poor one, which would never be occupied by any but workmen, tradesmen of the poorer class, and an occasional struggling writer like myself. The blocks of houses, experiments of speculative builders, loomed gaunt and spectral through the mist; they might have been the ruins of past ages instead of the barely finished erections of yesterday, as they waited till a connecting row of buildings should link them together. Between them lay fields—desolate fields, which the city had invaded and taken possession of, as being convenient spots in which to cast refuse, or store the bricks and stones of future walls; but where newly mated birds still clung to the homes they had built in their hereditary trees, and familiar flowers made brave efforts to bloom, in spite of the surrounding smoke and grime. These fields always

struck me with a peculiar feeling of depression; they were gloomier to me than the loneliest country lane. A brooding sadness seemed to overhang them, as if they were haunted by the prophetic ghosts of the inmates of the dwellings that were to arise upon them. The very cry of a bird, too early disturbed in its nest, seemed to my fretful ear to have a human sound.

Was it not a human cry? I heard it again, this time it seemed to articulate. "Help me, for Heaven's sake," I thought it said; and at the same moment I saw as I strained my eyes to pierce the morning mist, a figure running towards me, doubtless in search of help for some injured comrade. Yet surely it was the strangest being that ever sought aid for one in danger or pain! It was a man draped in a long cloak, which, however, floating behind him as he ran, displayed the piebald scarlet and white of his face and garments. It was the Pierrot of the masked ball—the Vicomte de Boisjoly.

"Vicomte!" I exclaimed as he approached me, and tried to catch him as he passed; but he eluded my hand and fled with a swiftness that defied pursuit.

Then I burst through the scant and tattered hedge, and hurrying onwards found what I knew must be lying somewhere, the body of my poor friend, René Michonneau. He still lived, but the blood was pouring from a bullet wound in his lungs, and the death-dew was gathering on his brow. One hand, from which the useless pistol had dropped, was clutching in agony at the stunted grass; I took the other in mine, and strove to raise him and to stanch the wound.

He seemed to recognise me and to feel no surprise at my appearing at that moment.

"Too late, Georges, too late," he gasped. Then recurring to the event of the previous hour—"She will get home safely?" he enquired.

"Doubtless," I answered briefly, feeling at that moment a most bitter indifference to the fate of Charlotte de la Trémouille.

"I have died for her," he went on—was it madness on my part to think I heard a certain triumph in his feeble voice? "It is worth doing, this—to die for love of a woman; and yet—yet—I doubt if she was worth it. Who knows? Women are weak and selfish, even the best of them; and she will be happier in the future if she has not loved me too well."

His voice died away, as the life-blood ebbed from him. In the last few moments his mind wandered, whether to past or future, who shall say! For his last words, before he fell back still and lifeless, were, "Embrasse moi, ma mère," accompanied by an outstretching of the arms, as if he, indeed, sought to clasp in them his long-dead mother.

In due course I laid an information against the Vicomte de Boisjoly. It was laughed at. The Vicomte swore that he had gone to bed before midnight, on the evening I spoke of, had never stirred till his valet brought him his coffee at eight o'clock next morning, and had not been at a masked ball since Carnival time. The valet confirmed his master's statement, and I could not call Mademoiselle de la Trémouille to witness to the truth of mine. I knew that, had the choice lain with René, he would rather a thousand times that his death should remain unavenged, than that a shade of scandal should fall on her.

I submitted to circumstances; and so, uninterrupted, save by such pangs of memory and conscience as may venture to attack personages of the "grand monde," a gay wedding took place at the Madeleine, and flowers were scattered, and opera-singers sang, and an Archbishop made Alfred de Boisjoly and Charlotte de la Trémouille man and wife. And if the bride looked deadly pale beneath her wreath of flowers, and the bridegroom strove, vainly, to hide sullenness with smiles, the satisfaction that beamed on the countenance of the Marquis Alain de la Trémouille was perfect and sincere.

Do you wish to hear more? The Vicomtesse de Boisjoly, after six months of the most reckless gaiety, extravagant and eccentric even for Paris, suddenly retired to the country, where she has remained ever since. Rumour says that she has gone mad. Meanwhile, the Vicomte spends most of his time at Monte Carlo, and is doing his best to kill himself with absinthe.

Michonneau is not wholly unavenged.

A LITTLE GREY CAT.

By PAUL CHALLINOR.

"THIS is yours, miss, I think," said a civil man in the corner, tossing it into Fanny's lap.

He had rescued "it" from being swept out of the omnibus, under the dingy skirts of the shabby old woman with a bundle, who got out at the last stoppage. The little red muff had been tossing about underfoot, on the dusty boards of the Islington omnibus, had been trodden on, had been kicked from corner to corner unperceived. No wonder Fanny shrank back, too disgusted to say "Thank you." The civil man retreated immediately behind his newspaper, with evidently no desire for further conversation.

Then she picked it up gingerly, and looked at it. A dainty little article—crimson plush, satin-lined, wadded, quilted, scented, with a cataract of pendent loops of ribbon at one side, and perched on the top, by way of decoration, the dearest, softest, tiniest mite of a grey French kitten, exquisitely mounted; the pose life-like, with one delicate paw advanced, claws distended, in a clutch at the ribbons, the tail erect and bushy. The little, bright-eyed face looked out from its soft ruff with irresistible kittenish *espièglerie*. It was the work of an artist. Fanny beat the dust from it tenderly, caressed it admiringly, smoothed the plush, straightened the ribbons with a feminine and professional instinct, and began to cast about for the owner.

Not the civil man in the corner, of course; nor yet the old charwoman with the bundle. Who else had been in the omnibus? It had been empty when she entered, with two boys scrambling in after her. They were not likely to be the possessors. They had straps of books, and fishing-rods, and a sloppy and muddy tin can, possibly containing bait. Then in had come a hot, anxious woman with a baby, a two-year-old child, a three-year-old child, and twin little lads of four or five. She had brought in a bird-cage, a basket, and a parcel done up in a bursting newspaper, but no muff, Fanny was convinced. Nor had the lady in deep crape who succeeded her; nor yet the two stout foreigners, who had stared her out of countenance. That was the sum-total of her fellow-passengers. She must hand the muff to the conductor; and, with this praiseworthy intent, she moved to the door and ineffectually signed to him.

As she did so the 'bus stopped, and some school-girls, out a-holiday-making, got in, and the 'bus was off again before Fanny could make her tale heard. There were many glances of admiration cast in

the direction of Fanny's lap, where the little grey cat reposed so becomingly. She felt them in her inmost soul; and with every glance her intent of restitution wavered. The red plush just matched her old winter frock and jacket, giving them exactly the touch of style which she had felt she needed. No wonder the man in the corner was sure she was the owner. The grey puss harmonised with her poor little cheap fur ruff, which she knew was shabby, but had not dared to replace in the present state of her finances; for she was a good little woman, and the big satchel beside her was stuffed full of small presents for all the people at home.

There was a silk muffler for father, and a beautiful knitted petticoat for mother, bought cheap at the spring sales, but good for next winter; a smart photograph frame for sister Lizzie, and a book for Tommy; a fashionable beer-jug for Polly the married sister, and a string of Cyprus beads for the baby. Also, at the bottom was something else, most special of all. A small parcel addressed to nobody in particular, only inscribed in Fanny's very best handwriting with the distich—

When this you see,
Remember me.

and tied up with a bit of blue ribbon. Inside was the most beautiful embroidered tobacco-pouch, made, every stitch of it, by Fanny's own tired little fingers in her spare moments. A magnificent production, all silk and tinsel, with "A E I" in gold, surrounded by a wreath of forget-me-nots. She hadn't the faintest notion of what the letters stood for, but the flowers were plain enough for, well—Anybody—to understand; supposing that—Anybody—had cared to remember her for so long as twelve months, and supposing that—Anybody—had got over a foolish prejudice against her going to London to business.

Then she clean forgot the muff for full five minutes in a vision of home and father, and a certain spot near the mill-tail, where the real forget-me-nots grew near the cleft in the bank. The tumble-down old bridge crossed the mill-stream just above it, leading to the field-path to Dowse's smithy. Was "D. D.," for "Dan Dowse," still to be seen on the top rail she wondered? And the "F.," for "Fanny," which she had cut herself? She would have cut another "F.," for "Flowerdale," too, but Dan had said, "where's the use?" and had made her leave it as it was—an "F" and a "D," and a big "D" and a circle round

all three, and asked her how she thought that looked. It looked so dreadfully particular, she thought, that she could not answer; but just tossed her head and ran back to the mill.

Well, she dared say it was all rubbed away by this time, and nobody cared. She did wish she had not made so much of the delights of London in her letters home. It must have looked as if she regretted nothing, and nobody, that she had left behind. If he had only spoken out; or if she had had any thing to go upon! Perhaps this holiday might set all to rights again. She had screwed and scraped to afford it out of her scanty little salary. She was only a milliner's assistant from Islington High Street—a shabby thing in heroines, one must admit with regret.

The sun shone out good-naturedly to brighten up the little girl's holiday. The old mill standing in the garden of bright spring flowers splashed out a noisy welcome. Father, rubicund and round, in his white cap and powdered whiskers, was waiting at the gate to greet her. Above the pink and white blossom of the orchard peeped a well-known corner of mossy red-tiled gable and chimney-stack—the chimneys of the forge—smokeless, as she saw in an instant's brief glance, even as she flung her arms round poor, sickly mother's neck, and heard her exclaim at her thinness and paleness. She dared ask no questions then. Lizzie was "Oh, mying!" at her smart clothes, and telling all about Polly's baby's christening; and Tommy was whooping round her, trying to drag her off there and then to inspect a water-rat's nest, and try the new pitchfork which Dan Dowse had given him for a keepsake.

"Ah, poor Dowse!" said the worthy miller, with the certain air of melancholy complacency which so often accompanies the telling of bad news. "Poor old Dowse! We shall miss him here, I'm thinking. You're just in time for the funeral, Fan."

"Funeral!"

The little red muff dropped unheeded to Fanny's feet, and she stared at him blankly.

"Old Mrs. Dowse. She's gone at last, sure enough. A happy release; there's no denying it. Drove Tom to New Zealand with her nagging tongue. The doctors say she must have been an awful sufferer, though. Dan never crossed her in anything, nor let her want for anything that

money could buy to the last. Now Tom's doing first-rate out there, and has written for Dan to join him."

"But Dan won't go, will he, father?"

"Why not, lass? He's got no one to please but himself now. There'll be a handsome funeral. You're just in time." And the miller departed to his work; while Fanny was taken out to see the chickens and the new cart and horse, and then on to Polly's new house to tea.

The road led past the forge, across the wide, black cinder mark in the white road that she knew so well. The forge fires were out, and the great doors closed and barred. In the pretty, ill-kept, old red house the blinds were drawn down, and Fanny thought with a pang of all the hard things she had tried not to say or think about the poor, vexatious, shiftless old slattern lying dead behind the white curtains. Then there flashed before her—to be driven away at once—the vision of the different home she could make there for Dan—if Dan would ever ask her.

Then they came to Polly's; and Polly had got the house and baby in grand array to receive them, with hot scones and honey-cakes, apple-pasties, and gingerbread for tea. Baby, thriving, red, and kicking, was almost bursting out of the fine christening-frock Mrs. Swete at the Hall had given him. Mrs. Swete had further deigned to send an invitation, as distinct and imperative as a Royal command to Court, to Fanny and Lizzie to come up to the hall to supper with her that evening.

No one thought of refusing. Mrs. Swete was a great person in the village. She had been housekeeper to Sir Edmund, and to his father before him—the undisputed mistress of the place till such time as the young Baronet should take unto himself a bride. Moreover, she was a cousin of the miller's, with money at her disposal; and Fanny's godmother. She had always claimed a certain measure of authority over the girl, and had, in fact, been the chief instigator of her move to town. Fanny submitted amiably to a severe cross-examination about her life there, her work, and her acquaintances, which apparently satisfied Mrs. Swete, for she nodded approval once or twice. Then she dismissed Lizzie to "look round the conservatories before it got too dark," and settling herself in her big chair by the window, prepared to be confidential.

"So you've never seen my young master there, never? Well, that's odd, con-

sidering how often he goes up to London. Perhaps Islington may be a little out of his way though."

"How is Master Edmund—Sir Edmund, I mean?"

"Ah, child," with an ominous shake of the head. "You may well ask 'How's Sir Edmund?' I only wish I could tell you. Oh, that Switzerland! Never with my good will will I see a gentleman of family go wasting his time in foreign parts again!"

"It was natural that he should want a little bit of pleasuring once his father had gone, wasn't it?" suggested Fanny shyly. "He hadn't much in his lifetime."

"It wouldn't become me to pass observations on my late master, Fanny; but I never did hold with his bringing up of the young gentlemen. All the sweet to one, and all the sour to the other—and him the heir. Well, well! he's in his grave, and poor Master Rex too, and Sir Edmund mayn't be long a-following them."

"Mercy! What's the matter?" asked Fanny dismayed. She and Sir Edmund had been playfellows once upon a time, in the lonely days of his motherless, neglected boyhood, and the kindly feeling had lasted on ever since—which perhaps accounted for Mrs. Swete's desire to see Fanny established at a safe distance.

"Matter? He's bewitched, I think. All through the shooting season he hardly touched a gun. Jakes—the new keeper—said it made him sick, it did, to see them poor partridges running about with nobody doing their duty by them. Then, when the hunting began, one day he'd ride like a madman, and the next come sauntering home without seeing a run. Then he was backward and forward to London—all for nothing that anybody can tell," and a flash of latent suspicion rekindled in Mrs. Swete's eyes. "That's a handsome muff you have got there. How did you come by it?" she asked sharply, and somewhat inconsequently.

Fanny told her story.

"Ah, I daresay it isn't as expensive as it looks. Perhaps you'd better watch for the advertisement though. Send up Tommy to-morrow, and I'll look you out the 'Times' for last week. It suits your frock nicely too. I may as well give you my grey ostrich feather. It will look better in your hat than that shabby wing and bow; and it matches the cat's fur too. You mayn't have to give her back after all."

Mrs. Swete, whose sense of duty to the family kept her aloof from village gossips, brightened up mightily after this unburdening of her mind, and was supremely gracious for the rest of the evening.

"Why, where can you have been, Fanny?" asked the miller on her return home. "Here's Dan Dowse been waiting and waiting till I had to send him off to Polly's to find you. Didn't you see him? Perhaps he thought it wasn't decent, though, with his mother not in her grave yet, to go running round after the lasses."

Fanny's pillow that night was wet with tears that were not at all for Sir Edmund's troubles.

A fine, bright, summer-like country Sunday. Fanny couldn't deny herself the pleasure of wearing the little grey cat, for the last time perhaps. She had pinned Mrs. Swete's noble grey plume round her scanty red velvet hat, and the red muff just covered the worn front of her jacket. She had drawn on a long pair of grey Suede gloves—old "shop-keepers," stained with mildew, and bought for a song—her hair was turned up high in a fashion yet unknown in these primitive regions; her skirts had the latest set; and a very grand and stylish young lady indeed she looked, as she walked up the rough, flagged aisle to the green-lined box, belonging by hereditary right to the owners of the mill, and cast a glance, just one, towards the benches in front of the organ, where Dan Dowse used to sit and lead the basses.

As soon as she did so, she felt hot with confusion. She had not thought of old Mrs. Dowse's funeral that was to take place that day, till she saw Dan and all the funeral party assembled in the deepest of black. Most of the neighbours, too, had assumed some little token of mourning in respect to the family, and her smart clothes seemed doubly out of keeping, and as if worn to flout the universal sentiment. She blushed to the brim of her hat with vexation, and kept her eyes averted from Dan, looking straight before her into the Squire's pew, where Sir Edmund, a tall, broad-shouldered, somewhat heavy-featured young fellow, sat in moody meditation, his shoulders up to his ears, dragging at his black moustache, and frowning to himself in almost ostentatious inattention to the service.

It was over at last; and as they issued from the old grey porch the funeral bell

began to toll just over their heads, and Fanny shivered and wanted to run home to cry, but that was impossible. Friends came up to greet her, and she had to bear with criticisms on herself, inquiries after her London lover—a local joke that would stand a good deal of wear—and remarks on Dan Dowse's bearing and prospects, and the news that Eben Prawley had made him a handsome offer for the forge and house, as he wished to set up his son there on his marriage.

The funeral party was mustering and marshalling. The neighbours, in their decent black, gathered for the service. Fanny could not stay. She felt as if every eye was turned on her flaring smartness, and, to Lizzie's surprise, slipped quietly away over the stile, and off across the fields as fast as her feet could carry her to the mill.

At the gate was Tommy, hot and breathless.

"Is the burying all done?" he asked, with a rueful visage. "And I did want to see the coffin go in; but Mrs. Swete she have kep' me so long a-finding this for you—"

"You'll be in time, Tommy."

Tommy withdrew his knuckles from his eye, stuffed a "Times" advertisement-sheet into her hand, and was off as fast as his small legs could carry him.

She carried the paper mechanically up to her room, where the first thing that met her was her own pretty reflection in Lizzie's glass. She dared not cry, but in a sort of dumb fury that was a substitute for tears, dragged off her long gloves, tossed her smart hat away, and, taking up the little red muff, looked at it with vindictive eyes as at a talisman that had worked her evil. She gave the poor little puss a hard fling to the other end of the room, and then set to work to untwist and tear down her pretty fashionable coils of hair, pulling and tangling with reckless cruelty till she got it all shaken loose over her shoulders, and then proceeded to screw it up severely into penitential flatness and sleekness, damping out every ripple of crimp or spray of curl, and making, as Lizzie observed half-an-hour later, "as much of a sight as she could of herself."

After the dinner—doubly good and plentiful in her honour—she helped her mother to clear away as in old times; and, as in the old times, there came presently the click of the iron garden-gate and a heavy tread crunching the loose gravel of the path

round the house to the back, and Fanny's heart gave one wild leap of hopefulness. But it was only her brother-in-law, followed by Polly carrying the baby.

Little did he think, honest man, how near to hating him Fanny came when he took his seat in a certain wooden brass-bound arm-chair, opposite to the miller, on the hearth, and filled his pipe from the jar of tobacco on the corner of the mantel-shelf, looking so like and so unlike another figure that used to occupy that place. Polly and her mother fell into a discussion on the short-coating of baby. Lizzie and Tommy went to the Sunday school, and Fanny was at last left to herself.

She had an errand that she felt she must do, and at once.

Up to her room she sped and took from her bag the little parcel that had never found its owner. At the sight of the wreathed letters and the gay blue flowers, the tears gathered softly in her eyes.

"At least no one else shall have it. I'll drop it in the mill-stream," she had been thinking all day; but now her heart almost misgave her.

She shrouded herself in an old black shawl. Beside it lay the red muff, with the little playful cat peering at her with bright, twinkling eyes.

"And you shall go after it," she cried in a spasm of unreasoning rage.

The ground rose high on one side the mill-stream, and in the rough, stony bank was one cleft well known to her and one other. Up above it the gorse—which only goes out of season when kissing goes out of fashion—made a fence against intruders. Below, it could only be gained by stepping from stone to stone in the bed of the stream. The water was still; the great moss-grown wheel above creaked idly in its Sunday rest. Only two green meadows off were the smokeless chimneys of the forge; so near, and yet so far from her now! She had to cross the old bridge before the descent of the stream could be made. Its crazy rail was green with moss and rudely patched with fresh wood, yet the one place she knew of was intact; she could have found it with her eyes shut; three big iron nail-heads fastening the rail to its post, and just under them had been the initials! No trace of them remained. Not smoothed away by wear; not effaced by newer cuttings; but gone. The very piece had been cleanly cut out. It was no new cut either, for the

wood had darkened to the same colour as the rest, and the edges had become worn smooth.

It needed but this! Down the bank she scrambled blindly, and, springing from stone to stone in the water, reached her covert at last, and sitting down on a big boulder, let the sobs come as they would, crying as if her tears might fill the mill-stream or melt the very stones to pity. She dried her eyes at last and began to look about her.

The forget-me-nots floated on the still water at her feet. She drew forth her poor little keepsake and stooped forward to lay it with them; but drew back suddenly.

Someone was leaning over the rail of the bridge whistling fragments of a doleful melody. The willows that drooped from the bank formed a scanty veil of fresh green between her and him; but yet she feared to be seen. She would wait till he passed on. Mrs. Swete's newspaper was still in her pocket, so she drew it out, and affected to become absorbed in its perusal. A big pencil cross directed her attention at once to an advertisement.

"Stolen from a carriage in Regent Street, on the afternoon of Wednesday, the fifteenth, a red plush muff, with a little grey kitten on it. Also, a purse, containing a small sum in silver, a handkerchief with embroidered initials 'I. V. P.,' a case with a valuable gold bangle, and a parcel containing two lengths of old point lace. Any person giving information that shall lead to the recovery of these articles shall receive a reward of twenty pounds. Apply to Messrs. Brown and Jones, solicitors, Lincoln's Inn."

In a separate line below—

"N.B.—The above reward will be paid if the muff alone be restored."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Fanny, startled out of her sorrows for the moment. "Twenty pounds to be had for the asking!"

A smell of tobacco-smoke had been drifting down to her from the bridge, and now the end of a cigarette fell hissing into the water. Then came the sound of a foot-step gingerly stepping over the stones. Her retreat was discovered, and she sprang up in dismay.

"Don't stir, Fanny." It was Sir Edmund who spoke. "I've not had a chance of a word with you yet. I waited discreetly to make sure that you were really alone in

your bower. How are you? How do you like London, and how are you getting on?"

Sir Edmund's voice had the old familiar tone, and he smiled pleasantly on his former playmate.

"Quite well, thank you. How are you, sir?" Fanny asked, with a friendly little smile.

"Nothing very bright. I've half a mind to go out to New Zealand with our friend at the smithy. What have you been doing to him, Fanny, you witch? I expected to have heard the banns published months ago."

She flashed an offended look at him, and he checked himself.

"I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to vex you. One gets into the way of such jokes. They're bad form, I know; but I'm an ill-bred country lout, as I always was. How should I be anything else?" he went on in a sort of rage at himself. "You know what my father was, and how he treated me?"

Fanny nodded. The evil reputation of Sir Hugh had become a village proverb.

"You know how he grudged me the bringing up of a gentleman. He was glad to see me growing up rough and rude like one of his own farm labourers. He hated me for my mother's sake. He hated me for my own. He hated me because I lived, and he hated me worse because my poor brother Rex died. What chance have I had?" he went on savagely. "How am I to be anything but a boor, an ill-mannered, uncouth ruffian, that no lady can look at except with scorn."

"Nay, now, sir. I'm sure we all thought a deal of you."

"Oh, the folks here? Yes. Because I know a horse when I see one, and am a decent shot. Yes, I'm the sort of squire to suit them. But for the rest—for all that belongs to the real work of a country gentleman, what training had I?"

"Why, sir, you used to read a lot, and teach yourself things."

He nodded gloomily.

"I was vain enough once upon a time to fancy that brains and hard work might make something of a man in the long run; but I've seen the folly of the notion. I've been up to town as well as you, Fan, since we last met."

"One learns a deal there, sir."

"Yes, you've found out how to make a fine lady of yourself, little Fan," he went on, looking at her with dreary approval.

"You've lost the village twang, and you carry yourself in your smart gown like a little duchess, and look down on your lowly admirers."

"Oh don't, sir, don't!" she pleaded, half-crying.

"Do you think I could learn as much in as short a time? No, I know better. I'm in my proper place down here. I can do my duty by the land and the people. Perhaps if they sent me up to Parliament one of these days, I could do some better work there than some of those I listened to. Bah! What's the good?" he broke off impatiently. "I shall still be a rough, uncultured yokel. There's a whole textbook of social graces and proprieties to be learnt before I'm fit for Society, and who's to teach me?"

"Your wife," said Fan, with the frankness of old days. "You marry a lady who's been brought up to it all herself, and you'll soon learn of her."

"A great lady? Like—someone I met once. Yes, I think Mrs. Pierpoint could do it," he said half to himself.

"The beautiful Mrs. Pierpoint? I've heard of her. I saw her portrait in the Academy, and all her gowns are in the 'Queen.'"

He burst into a harsh laugh. "Is she the sort of woman you think would devote herself to improving my mind and manners? Can't you fancy her coming down here to settle for life at the Hall, playing Joan to my Darby? I can tell you something absurd, Fanny. I once actually thought she meant to do it! Why don't you laugh? You are the only person who has heard the joke."

But Fanny's eyes only grew soft with pity.

"It was my ignorance, you see. How should I know Mrs. Vernon Pierpoint from any other pleasant friendly woman traveling with an invalid father, who took a sick man's fancy for my company. I was glad enough to keep with them as long as I decently could. She gave me a word and a smile when we parted, Fanny, on which I have lived all these winter months."

"Have you never met her again, sir?" Fanny asked, in a voice tremulous with sympathy.

"Seen her again? Oh yes, over and over again. Across a gaping crowd of admirers, no nearer. My beautiful lady with the clear, earnest eyes and sweet simple nature is a London beauty, as you say, Fanny. I was fool enough to worry for an invitation

to a big entertainment—the first I had ever been to in my life, and the last. There she was surrounded by great folks, and a Prince for a partner forsooth! and I outside the circle watching for a stray fragment of her notice—in vain. I came away. I had learned my place, Fanny."

"Oh, for shame, Sir Edmund! When it was your place to make your way to her in spite of everything, to let your pride hold you back! Think of her—waiting may be with an aching heart for you."

"I tell you I am nothing to her, nor she to me, henceforth I've learnt my lesson. We don't die for disappointed love now-a-days, Fan."

"Don't we, sir?" and the gathering tear in her eyes suddenly splashed down, and her hand closed on the little tobacco-pouch.

"We whistle the false ones away—so—and look out for someone who suits us better. I'm a country clod. I must mate in my own sphere, Fan."

A sudden, freakish, desperate light sparkled in his dark eyes.

"Why won't you take me? You'd make a capital lady, and you'll find me a good husband. Would you try?"

He spoke in bitter jest, but with enough serious purpose in it to send a dazzling temptation flashing before the girl's eyes; so vivid, so dazzling, that she shut them tight and clasped the little pouch as a talisman.

"Now you are joking ill-manneredly, Sir Edmund," she cried. "Please stop at once, or I must go away! If I could think you in earnest, all I should have to say to you would be that I'd shame to be a man and so poor a thing as you! To give up one's love for a bit of a cross! When it's the man's part to work, strive, and fight to get your will. I'm only a girl who must do no more than grieve and give up, but I'm truer and braver than you, for I'll hold to my love whatever may have come between us. His fancy may have changed, but mine shall hold to the end." She spoke out bravely, her cheeks hot and her eyes shining. Sir Edmund looked at her admiringly.

"Then you'd never have anything to say to me?"

"Never. Or if I had—if I had let myself be so ill-guided, and we were at the church door, nay, if the ring were on my finger, and I heard the voice of Dan Dowse calling me, I'd turn from you and follow him to the world's end!"

There came a mighty crash through the

gorse above them. The brushwood parted, and a black figure came sliding, rolling, scrambling down the bank till it landed between them, while a tall hat, veiled in mighty crape weepers, hopping down after, reached the bottom nearly as soon.

"Dan!" shrieked Fanny.

Dan was on his feet in a minute, with his arm around her waist.

"Hurra!" he shouted. "Hurra! my girl!—my Queen!—my Heart of Gold! And to think that I have been mistrusting, and moping, and hanging about, without daring to speak, thinking you'd got beyond me—thinking all manner of shabby things! I wish my neck had been wrung first! Yes, I've been listening. I'm a jealous, suspicious blockhead, you know; and I wouldn't have missed what I've heard for a thousand pounds!"

"Then I'm glad you have heard it," said Sir Edmund, with dignity. "You have been listening to my secrets, you are aware. I must beg you to respect them. I think I'd perhaps better go now," he ended, with a kindly smile. Dan held out his hand with a look that meant much.

"Good-bye, and thank you, sir," faltered Fanny, her face one scarlet blush.

"There's a word I'd like to say," put in Dan awkwardly enough. "Maybe—no offence, sir—you'd just cast over in your mind the mistake I've been a-making here. I see this young lady come back from London, where she's been meeting many a finer fellow than me—yourself amongst them, maybe, sir. I take everything she does amiss. I keep away from her. I settle in my mind that it's all up with me, and nothing left on this side of the world for me. The one thing I cared for would have gone with me, Fanny, my dear." He drew from his vest a little slip of wood, with three letters cut in it. "That's stayed by me ever since your pretty fingers touched it, and that would have gone to my grave with me."

"Oh, Dan!" And Fanny, oblivious of the spectator, fairly threw her arms round her blacksmith's neck and burst into tears.

The little rocky retreat had been overcrowded by one since Dan's uncere- monious entrance. Sir Edward would willingly have escaped, but the others barred his way. He turned discreetly away from them and pretended to kindle a fusee.

"Hulloa!" he cried, "what's this?"

He was holding up, with a face of excite-

ment, the little grey muff, that once again had fallen neglected and trodden under-foot.

"I've seen this before! I was in Brussels when it was bought. I'd swear to it any day!"

Fanny, recalled to a sense of the proprieties, hastily picked up the "Times" and searched for the advertisement. Sir Edmund snatched it from her and read with devouring eyes. "Hers!" he said under his breath, and reverently stroked the little creature's silky fur. "Her initials—Ida Vernon Pierpoint."

"But all the rest—the valuable things—are gone," said Fanny sadly. "It's odd, too, that she should set as much store by this as by all of them put together. It's a pretty cat; but it's a last season's fashion," and she turned the little animal about perplexedly.

Sir Edmund, looking puzzled likewise, stretched out his hand for the muff, then, with an awakened air, began searching under the paw of the little creature. At last he found the tiny spring of which he was in search, and a little secret pocket or purse disclosed itself. It held but one thing, a small russia-leather case, with the monogram "I.V.P." repeated in gold. Inside that was folded paper.

"Bank notes," said Dan.

"Love letters," cried Fanny.

Neither. Only a dry bit of white fluffy flower pinned on a gentleman's visiting card, across which a few pencilled words and a date. That was all Fanny could see, for Sir Edmund hastily closed it as one guarding an enshrined relic from infidel eyes. "The Edelweiss!" he murmured softly, his deep, dark eyes glowing, his handsome face radiant. His colour came and went like a girl's. There was evidently some deep significance in the sight for him alone.

"The Edelweiss! And she kept it for my sake!"

Fanny took the muff and stroked the little grey cat thoughtfully, considering the situation. Dan, beaming and uncomprehending, awaited her pleasure.

"Twenty pounds means a good deal to Dan and me. I don't think I can give up the muff to you, sir. But that case—it must be something very valuable in the lady's eyes. Perhaps, as the lawyers know nothing about it, for fear of accidents you had better take it back to her, Sir Edmund. I shouldn't wonder if she'd like best to settle with you

herself what the reward for bringing it back shall be."

"There's the five-forty up-train——" began Dan.

But Sir Edmund had gone.

THE KNELL OF KNOCKMAGH.

By FREDERICK TALBOT.

THE winter had been wild and rough, and nowhere wilder or rougher than on the west coast of Ireland, in a country which suited that kind of weather exactly. Where there was land it was brown and bare, and seemed to grow nothing but stones, although cleared with infinite labour, and the stones built into rough walls that made an intricate network of every hill-side. Where there was water, that was brown, too, and cheerless, rushing between rugged banks, or tossed in the wind-swept loughs that were thickly set everywhere among the bleak, bare moorlands. There were mountains, too, rugged and brown, rising in many tumbled peaks and summits; but these were rarely seen in the short winter days. The grey mists and wild, hurrying clouds seemed to form a kind of ceiling to the country, not far above people's heads, leaving nothing to be seen but the shoulder of a low hill perhaps, a black tarn edged with foam, or a river-side fringed with straggling bushes half-drowned in the swollen water.

But spring brought a wonderful change to this stubborn land of rock and flood. When the winter gales had blown themselves to a standstill, and the clouds had emptied their water-pots, when the sun stole out from among the massy walls of vapour, all the gloom of the land was changed to a misty kind of glamour. The solitary loughs shone like molten gold among the brown hills, now charged with a thousand subtle tints; even the stone walls were transformed, crested over with lichens and feathered with the fresh, green fronds of innumerable ferns. The rugged mountain peaks assumed a soft aerial charm, and the light sea-breeze was almost intoxicating in its purity and freedom.

Nor was the country any longer solitary. The fishing had been open for some weeks, but the storms and floods had so far put their veto upon it. Now, as the waters cleared, and the rivers retired into their proper beds, the whole angling world was alive and hastening to the scene. Boats

studded the surface of the loughs, and fishermen began to haunt their favourite pools. Not so many years ago, any brother of the gentle craft might whip the waters from river to lough with a welcome wherever he went. Times have changed; the old gentry of the land, so easy, hospitable, and profuse, have almost passed away, and in their place rules a great London Company which looks to profit chiefly, and turns its proprietary rights into hard cash. But there was a reach of water about two miles on either side of Knockmagh Castle—four miles, that is, of the best part of the river—that unites the two chief lakes of the district, which anyone might fish, on passing the compliment of asking Colonel O'Bryan's leave.

A sweet old home was Knockmagh Castle, facing the sunshine and the broad, flashing river. Two ancient gables, with broad, mullioned windows, looked out from a mass of ivy and creepers that clung to the grey old walls. Over the roofs and gables rose an old, square tower, covered with verdure to its very summit. Centuries of care and pains had turned the barren glen into a lovely pleasure. All was now wild and overgrown, but still charming. The terrace in front of the Castle was bounded by an old-fashioned balustrade of stone, and broad steps led down to the river, where a couple of boats were moored, that swayed gently to and fro in the swirl and eddy of the current.

"Sure, the ould place wants for nothing but to be let alone," said Thady, the old servant of the Castle, as he descended the steps with an armful of rods and fishing-tackle, which he carefully placed in the smaller of the boats. "Only to be let alone," repeated Thady, "and yet that's what those raskilly lawyers will never do."

"Thady," said a clear, musical voice from the terrace, "my father can't come out to-day. The fever has caught him again, and he can't stir. But he bids me go out, Thady; for a day like this must not be missed. We will drop down to the Abbey pool, and fish up the stream from there."

Thady looked up at the speaker, a young woman of eighteen or so, with the dark bronze hair and blue eyes of the true West-Country type—looked up at her slim figure in its light-fitting, home-spun dress, with something like contempt.

"And do you think, Miss Kate, ye can handle the Cornel's eighteen-foot rod and one of them fifteen-pound fish that is laping

in the pool down there? Why, he'd ate you, Miss Kate."

"Ah, now, Thady," cried Miss O'Bryan, humbly. "I can only do my best, you know; and I shall have your teaching, Thady, and your experience to guide me."

The old fellow was mollified by his young mistress's tribute to his talents, and, bringing the boat up to the steps, he steadied it while Kate O'Bryan took her seat, and then, taking an oar, he placed himself in the stern and sculled the craft down the river, guiding her down the rapids, and among the shoals and islets, with a ready and practised hand. Below the Castle the river took a wide sweep round a peninsula of low-lying meadow land that formed the demesne of the barony; and at the other extremity of the horse-shoe curve thus formed were the ruins of the ancient Abbey of St. Mary, where the fishing rights of Knockmagh ended. Below that point all belonged to the great Company. High over the meadows rose the tall, slender tower of the Abbey, which to anyone passing along the river seemed to change its position constantly in a very bewildering fashion. From the Castle you seemed to be leaving it behind: it faded away into the far distance, and then suddenly came into view close at hand, its tall pinnacles reflected in a placid reach of the river. Again it receded, and not till actually upon terra firma and under the very shadow of the tower could anyone feel quite sure as to its position.

Under the Abbey walls a narrow spit of gravel afforded a convenient landing-place, and here Thady moored the boat and brought out rods and tackle. A wide and tranquil pool stretched in front of the gravel spit, the water now pleasantly curled by a soft westerly breeze. The ripple of the water, the gentle sighing of the wind, the plash of a rising fish, the scurry of a water-hen with her little brood, the songs of the birds that nested about the Abbey walls, joined in the quiet repose of the scene, and seemed to accentuate the feeling of growth and movement in the air—the springing forth of flowers; the opening out of buds; the joyous renewal of animal and insect life.

"It is all very sweet, Thady, it would be sad to leave it," said Kate with a sigh, as she rested on the gunwale of the boat, and took in the whole scene with Thady in the foreground, busily putting together the long salmon rod, and with two or three gaudy salmon flies in his mouth, and

links of gut hanging round his neck, testing carefully every knot of the casting line.

Thady shook his head impatiently, as if to say how tantalising it was to be called upon for conversation with his mouth full of salmon flies. But he presently paused in his occupation, and, raising his head, seemed to listen intently. Then he cleared his mouth of the flies, which he stuck into his battered caubeen, and kneeling down placed an ear to the ground, still listening intently.

"Do ye hear nothing, Misthress darlin'?" he cried at last, "nothing but the stream and the birds? Do ye hear nothing like the towling of a bell, or are my ould ears desaving me?"

Kate listened too, and after awhile, perhaps from the force of imagination, she also began to fancy that she heard the dull sound of a ringing, as if from unknown depths, repeated at short but distinct intervals.

"Perhaps it is the Great Bell of Mullingar that is tolling," she said. "We hear it, you know, sometimes."

Thady shook his head despondently. "The wind does not set from Mullingar, my honey," he cried. "Sure 'tis Saint Mary's Bell we hear from the bottom of the pool,"—crossing himself devoutly. "'Tis the knell of Knockmagh. The angels guard and preserve us."

Kate O'Bryan turned pale. She knew what Thady meant. The legend of Saint Mary's Bell had been familiar to her from childhood—had been told her over and over again, but never too often by the old servants of the house. How Oliver Cromwell and his men had come to spoil the Abbey and burn down Knockmagh, but that the Fathers had warning a few hours beforehand, and had buried all their treasures deep in the earth, and thrown the great Abbey bell—all of gilded bronze with a silver clapper—into the middle of St. Coona's Pool, where it lies to this day; but not altogether silent, for whenever one of the O'Bryans is on the point of death, the silver clapper begins to move, and slowly tolls forth the solemn notes of the "Agony." The O'Bryans had earned this distinction as the chief benefactors of the Abbey in old times, having, indeed, been the donors of the bell itself, which an early O'Bryan had brought home across the seas—from Jerusalem itself, according to general belief.

Kate's eyes filled with tears as she

realised the dismal portent, which coincided too well with her own secret fears. Her father, once the most active of sportsmen and keenest of fishermen, had completely broken down this winter. Perhaps it was vexation and trouble as much as bodily disorders which had brought him low; but these things kill as surely as any other ailment when the frame has lost the elasticity of youth. Kate felt the omen, knowing at her heart that her father would die and leave her all alone in these sad and troubled days.

Just then a fine salmon flung itself bodily out of the water, gleaming for a moment silver bright in the air, and then falling back with a splash that echoed back from the precipitous banks on the other side.

"Arrah now, we are losing all the best of the morning," cried Thady, springing to his feet. "While the fish are laping out at us wid scorn;" and with hands trembling with excitement, he adjusted the rod, drew the line of tapered silk through the rings, attached the all important gut with the Colonel's two favourite flies on the stretcher and placed the rod in Miss O'Bryan's hands. "Now, Miss Kate darlin', if ye haven't forgot the turn of the wrist ould Thady shown ye, ye shall fling right over to the ring of foam beyant."

Kate was no novice, indeed, and yet her first cast was a good way short of the spot pointed out, but before the tail fly touched the water a big sea-trout dashed out at it, and hooked himself fairly out of the river. It was a fish of three or four pounds, but the spring of the powerful rod soon told upon the fish, and Thady had the landing-net under it, and brought it to bank without wasting any time. It was something to have scored already, and Kate made her next cast with more confidence. Again a silvery gleam, and the thrilling pull of a big fish, sent a rapturous throb of triumph and excitement through the girl's frame. This time she had hooked the monarch of the pool. Twice he leapt out of the water in angry amazement, and then he dashed across the river and back again, leaving a whirl of water in his trail, as he headed down the stream and plunged into the rapids. "Hold him up, Miss Kate, darlint, hold him up, we shall lose him if he gets among the stones beyant," cried Thady, as he dashed after the fish, wild with excitement, half in and half out of the water, flourishing the gleaming gaff, burning to share in the capture of the fish. Kate

was getting tired now, the rod was too heavy for her. Instead of her bringing the fish to land, it would surely pull her into the water. With her last despairing effort she thrust forward the butt of the rod—if the line held, she herself would break in two, Kate felt; but the line held and still she was not broken, while at last the fish was turned and came back sullenly and slowly, with many sudden darts and twists, up against the stream. Kate now regained her breath, and slowly reeled in her line, and presently deftly leading her fish towards the bank, Thady dexterously gaffed him and brought him out.

Then the pair sat down beside their victim and enjoyed a moment of unalloyed triumph. "'Tis the purtiest fish that will be caught in these waters this day," cried Thady, "the finest fish, take him altogether, I ever did see. Miss Kate, darlint, did you ever see a fish landed claner than that?"

"It was beautiful, Thady, and I didn't play him badly, either?"

"The Cornel couldn't have done better, and there is no higher praise than that," pronounced Thady magisterially.

Engrossed in the subject, neither of them had perceived the approach of a tall gaunt-looking fellow in a Scotch bonnet, with a plaid twisted round his shoulders, who, with noiseless slouching steps, had come quickly along the river-bank. With a quick rude grasp, he seized the rod that Miss O'Bryan still grasped in her small brown hands.

"I must have this rod, Miss, and the fish too that ye've caught. The waters belong to uz now: if ye please, and ye're just trespassers."

Kate sprang to her feet in a blaze of indignation, "Do you know to whom you are talking?" she cried, stamping her foot on the ground. "Do you know that I am Miss O'Bryan?"

"I know my orders, Miss, and that's all I care to know; the feeshing's let, and the Company's orders air that all rods found trespassing air to be seized."

"These are our own waters, sir," cried Kate, trying to keep calm; "and you are the trespasser."

"I've no time to be arguring with yer," said the Scotch keeper, for such he was—the Company's head water-bailiff. "So just hand me the rod and the feesh, and if ye've aught to complain of ye can bring me before the magistrate."

"Thady," cried Kate O'Bryan, still hold-

ing to the rod which the keeper was roughly tying to wrest from her. "Throw me this fellow into the river!"

Thady only waited for the word, his blood had been at boiling-point while the discussion lasted. In a regular combat probably the keeper would have had the best of it, for he was younger and far more powerful than his antagonist, but Thady launched himself upon him with such sudden fury that he was driven backwards towards the river, and, tripping at the edge, fell into the stream with a great splash and disappeared.

Miss O'Bryan gave a loud cry of dismay at the sight; all her indignation vanished in a moment. The man was in danger of his life. Springing into the boat, she pushed out into the stream and let it float with the current, watching anxiously for the reappearance of the keeper; he was sure to rise after his ducking; and sure enough there he was! She saw him, and gave a sob of thankfulness as she put out her arm to grasp him and help him into the boat. But it was only the man's plaid that she grasped and drew dripping into the boat. There was nothing else to be seen; the waters flowed on with swift and sullen force, gurgling and leaping as if in derision of drowning men. The minutes flew fast, and with each minute the chance of life decreased, and the certainty of death became more fixed. The drowning man must have been caught and held below by some root or clinging growth. Had the body been free, it would have appeared at the surface long ago. She looked round despairingly for help. There was not a soul in sight except Thady, who, with head bent down and limbs relaxed, was slowly following by the river-side.

A sense of hopelessness came over Kate as the boat grounded against the bank. "Can't you do anything, Thady?" she cried, wringing her hands in despair. "The man is perishing."

"He is perish't by now, Miss Kate," said Thady, sullenly. "Well, and what are the odds? 'Tis but a scoundrel the less in the world. And he had warning of it too from me."

"And what shall we do? Oh, Thady, what can we do?"

"I'll tell you what ye shall do, Miss," replied Thady. "Ye shall go back to the Castle, and take the car, and drive over to the police barracks. And ye shall tell them that Thady O'Connor has thrown the Scotch keeper into the water, and drowned him."

"But, Thady, they will put you in prison——"

"They will hang me," said Thady, sentimentally.

"And I shall have put the rope about your neck? And 'twas I bade you do it. Oh no, Thady; you can't think I'd be so base."

"Then if you don't spake now, Miss, ye must for ever hould your tongue. Sure there's none but Him above that knows what we've done this day."

Kate shuddered and hid her face in her hands; but when she looked up once more, her features were fixed and firm, her eyes steadfast and clear. "We will go home, Thady, and tell my father—he shall judge what it is right to do."

"I'll be satisfied with what the Cornel says," replied Thady, slowly. With that he shouldered the rod and fishing basket, and followed Miss O'Bryan along the path to the Castle. It was barely a mile across the neck of the isthmus—although nearly three in following the circuit of the river—and the Castle and Abbey were in full view of each other, the former embosomed in trees and luxuriant shrubs, while the latter stood bare, and gaunt, and ruined, in what was now a swampy waste. Half-way between the two points appeared a tall, good-looking young fellow, who was evidently on the look-out for Miss O'Bryan.

"Oh, Kate," he cried, seizing her warmly by the hand. "I am so glad to have found you. I came to speak to the Colonel on a matter of business, but I find that he is too ill to see me. I fear that he is worse since you left, for they say he is quite light-headed, and is continually calling for his Kate."

"Ah! why did I leave him," said Kate, "and with all the trouble that I had in my mind about him? Don't stop me, Mark, let me run to him."

"But, my darling," said Mark, "you must not take it like that. He is not very bad, it is just a spring fever; he will be all right with a little care."

Kate shook her head mournfully as she hurried on, Mark Butler following with his long stride, and Thady hanging behind with a dejected woe-begone air. But when they reached Knockmagh, they were told that the Colonel had fallen into a deep sleep. And after glancing into his room, and assuring herself that her father was really sleeping—and it made her heart ache, to see how changed and pinched his face had become in the last few hours—

Kate came down again to speak to Mark Butler. Her heart was so full of trouble that there seemed to be no more room for grief; but she knew that Mark could have no pleasant tidings to bring to Knockmagh.

Mark had to confess that his tidings were far from pleasant; he had come all the way from Dublin post-haste to put the Colonel on his guard. The Company who held a heavy mortgage on his estate had got a decree of possession, and, as the lands were not likely to be more profitable to them than they had been to the Colonel, who had got but little out of them for several years, it seemed probable that they would make a push to get hold of the Castle and the fisheries, which would let for a good yearly sum.

"And," said Kate, raising her eyes to heaven, "if my father is only spared to me, I'll gladly leave these walls and beg for him bare-footed along the roads."

She felt what she said. Here would be a penance, an expiation, that would lift the weight of guilt from her soul and suffer her to hope for peace beyond the grave.

"Oh, Kate," said Mark, his honest eyes filling with moisture at the picture she had suggested, "there is a better way than that. Marry me, Kate. Oh, I know what you would say," he went on, as Kate interrupted him with a gesture of denial; "but my father has changed since I spoke to him before, and my mother too. They see that my heart is set upon you, Kate, and surely the old feud between your father and mine is settled now. And my father will give me the money to redeem Knockmagh, and it shall be yours, Kate, yours and mine, and your father shall end his days here in peace."

"'Tis all a dream," said Kate sadly, thrusting back the strong arm that would have enfolded her. "Do you think my father would live on a guest in his own house—the guest of his old enemy's son? No, Mark. Do your mother's bidding. Go back to your Lady Louisa, that everybody says is dying to have you."

"Ah, Kate," cried Mark joyously. "I see that you are jealous a bit. And would you be jealous if you did not love me a trifle?"

"I don't say no," said Kate, "just the least of a trifle, once perhaps. But, Mark, with all that there's a trouble about me you can never share. There is something on my mind that bids me never think of love or

marriage. As long as my father lives, I'll stay with him; and, when I've closed his eyes, I'll go to my mother's sister, she is the Mother Superior of the Convent at Mullingar, you know, and there I'll end my days."

Mark argued, persisted, entreated, all in vain. He could make no impression upon Kate's resolution, nor induce her to share her troubles, whatever they might be, with one who loved her so much. At last he rode away determined, at all events, to try to put off the execution of the decree. It would be a burning shame to turn out the old Colonel in sickness and distress. Long ago the country would have risen to defend the O'Bryans, a word from whom would have gone further than a decree from the Lord Chief Justice. But all was changed now. The "boys" had their own business to attend to, and nobody cared a button whether the O'Bryans went or stayed.

As Kate saw her lover ride away, and turned from the gate, sad and weary-hearted, she was accosted by the gossoon who hung about the place, and whom Thady had despatched to bring back the boat.

"Av ye plase, Miss O'Bryan, I've brought along your schawl that's smothered in wet. Will I take it round to the kitchen and bid them dry it for you?"

Kate turned upon the lad quite white with horror. It was the dead man's plaid that the lad held up before her. She had left it in the boat, and thought no more about it. The first impulse was to bid the lad throw it into the river, and then she thought of the danger of the boy's chattering about such a strange proceeding.

"Give it to me, Phil," she said, after a moment's reflection; and she took the plaid to her own room and mechanically hung it over some pegs to dry.

There it seemed to suggest the form of the Scotch keeper so strongly that she could not bear to look at it. But there it should stay, she said to herself. If she must not reveal, neither would she conceal; and, hanging there, it should remind her continually of her crime.

Towards evening the Colonel was more lucid. The doctor had been to see him, and had sent him a draught. He had not much to say as to his patient's state, but he did not seem to take a cheerful view of the case. The Colonel rambled a good deal still, and turned over his law papers, which he insisted should be brought to him. He tried to explain things to Kate, but he

mixed up present and past transactions so hopelessly that she could make nothing of his instructions. Again the Colonel fell into a heavy sleep, and Kate arranged to sit up the first part of the night with him.

The Colonel's bed-room was a fine stately chamber, which occupied the whole of the principal floor of the old tower, which had been the stronghold of other days. It had handsome, carved chimney-pieces of stone; and a broad, open hearth, where a peat fire was now smouldering. A winding staircase of stone communicated with the vaulted room below—an arrangement which had been found inconvenient in one particular. The O'Bryans were tall and massive in build, and when the chief of the house happened to die in his bed—as sometimes chanced in these degenerate days—it was found impossible, after the modern fashion of coffins came in, to get the dead O'Bryan down the staircase. Hence, about a hundred and fifty years ago, a square hole had been driven through the vaulting, through which, when need was, the coffin could be lowered. The boarding of the floor clearly showed this opening, which was just at the foot of the Colonel's bed. To-night those boards creaked horribly. It was as if somebody was trying to prise them open.

Kate sat and listened without either fear or surprise. Her mind was braced to endure anything; and a distinct apparition from the unknown world would have been even welcome to her, as a relief from the dull suspense and expectancy that had taken possession of her. But nothing came. The moon was shining brightly, and now sent a gleam through the narrow lancet window of the tower—the window that looked over towards the Abbey, where was still the burial-place of the O'Bryans. Full and round shone the moon in the solemn, placid sky, silvering the tall Abbey tower, and darting a bright beam among the ripples of the dark pool beyond. Kate opened the window and looked out. The calm and tranquillity of the scene were refreshing. From the river came a deep, tremulous murmur, and, indistinctly mingling with it, a soft musical note, which, as a breeze stole across, rose into a distinct and rapid knell. Her father had heard it, too. He was awake, and, raising himself on one elbow, he was listening intently.

"Tis for me, Kate," he said softly, as his daughter came to his side. "I expected it, darling, and, but for leaving you,

I'd be glad to be gone. My head is clear now, my dear, and it may not be again, and so I give you my blessing; and Kate, my wishes are that you shall marry Mark, if he asks you again, which I think he will. And Kate, mind you tell his father, Sir William, that I forgive him all the dirty, unneighbourly actions he has done against me. You'll put it like that, Kate; you won't let the creature off too cheap?"

"Indeed I won't!" replied Kate, sobbing; "but, father dear, I'll not marry Mark. I feel that I have a vocation, and, if you leave me, I'll join the Sacred Heart at Mullingar."

The Colonel shook his head doubtfully.

"Well, it isn't for me in my last hours to say anything against it; and the trifle of money your mother left you will serve for your dower. And Kate, if it's going to be that way, you might speak a bit sharper to Sir William."

After this the Colonel dozed off again, and presently fell into a quiet, tranquil sleep. If it had not been for the warning they had received, Kate would have believed that he was getting better.

The morning light brought its troubles, too.

"Oh, for the light heart of yesterday!" said Kate to herself as she prepared to face the anxiety and suspense that awaited her. While she was still at breakfast in the little room that commanded the principal entrance, she saw a woman with a child in her arms dragging herself wearily up the drive. Presently, Thady made his appearance, with an appealing, warning look upon his face:

"Miss O'Bryan, there's a woman says she's the wife of yonder Scotch keeper beyant."

"I'll see her, Thady," replied Kate, restraining her strong desire to burst into tears.

Andrew, the Scotch keeper, had married a woman of the country, one of the Joyces, who are not just the same as the other West-Country people. She was a dark little woman, and ready enough with her tongue, as Andrew knew to his cost, although it was said that he gave her plenty of excuse for her scolding ways. But she was quiet and deferential enough before Miss O'Bryan. She had come to her on account of the trouble she was in about her husband, who had not been seen since early on the previous day. Andrew had left her in a very bad temper, having his head full of whisky, and she knew that he

had business with the Colonel; and perhaps he had been impudent enough; and, if he had been clapped in prison for the night, no doubt he was rightly served, and she would make no complaint. Only let her have him now, for she was weary and sad in watching for him, and the child had been crying for his daddy ever since."

"I'd cry with you too," said Kate, "if crying were any good. But why should you think that we have been keeping your good man; and where should we hide him?"

The woman replied, looking uneasily about her, that she had been told there were dungeons and secret places about the Castle, where people might be shut up and nobody ever the wiser. But if Miss O'Bryan passed her word that Andrew was not there, and that she knew nothing about him, his wife must search for him elsewhere. Kate, feeling that she was piling crime upon crime, gave the required assurance. She gave the woman, too, all the money she had about her, and Mrs. Andrew departed somewhat consoled, but only half satisfied.

After that, there were no more enquiries for the missing man for a week or more. The days had passed without any discovery, and in the most complete tranquillity. If there was a decree out against the Castle, nobody attempted to execute it. The Colonel still was lying in the same weak, sinking state. Mark rode up to the lodge every morning to ask after the invalid; but no one else came near. The report of the family misfortunes had got abroad, and the people of the neighbourhood declared that to visit them under such distressing circumstances would be unwarranted intrusion. Thady, meantime, was the good genius of the house. He managed the fishing. How he did it Kate did not care to enquire, but he sold the fish. Salmon was worth half-a-crown a pound just then, even by the river-side, and he kept the household going with the money and provided all the dainties that could be imagined to tempt the Colonel's appetite.

Then the keeper's wife began to haunt the neighbourhood of the Castle. Sometimes along the river-bank, sometimes within the ground, looking up at each ivy-covered window and scrutinising the machicolations over the corners of the house and over the great doorway, as if she suspected her husband was hidden among them. Thady often entered into

conversation with her. He was free from remorse anyhow, and feared nothing but the strong arm of the law.

"'Tis the ninth day, Miss O'Bryan," said Thady one morning as Kate stood on the terrace and watched the river glide by—"the ninth day since the Scotchman was lost, and they say now that if he was drowned he is sure to rise, and the widow is walking the banks all day to search for him."

"Then you're satisfied she is a widow, eh, Mr. Thady?" said the voice of one who had stolen up unawares.

Thady started guiltily, for though the new comer was dressed in plain clothes, he recognised him at once as the superintendent of police.

"Your pardon, Miss O'Bryan," said the official, raising his hat, "but I must beg permission to ask a few questions of your servant. Now, Thady, I'm told you know something about Andrew that's missing, and more's the reason you have to clear yourself as you were known to be ill friends and had threatened each other the week before in Widow Shehan's shebeen. Now, Andrew was last seen alive at eleven o'clock on Wednesday morning, on his way to the Castle, where he had processes to serve, as I'm informed."

"You know a dale more about the matter than I do, Mr. Superintendent, it seems," replied Thady, doggedly.

"Don't answer any questions if the answers tend to criminate you, my man," rejoined the police officer adroitly. "But if you can clear yourself——"

"I think I can answer for Thady," interposed Kate. "On the day you mention, Thady was with me all the morning, and I think I could account for every moment of his time all the day."

"That would be an unexceptionable alibi, Miss O'Bryan," said the officer, politely. "You are quite sure about the day?"

"Perfectly sure," replied Kate, with difficulty smothering a sigh.

"And you saw nothing of the man yourself?"

"Nothing," echoed Kate, feeling herself to be the vilest of the vile.

After a few more searching questions, the police officer, apparently satisfied, turned away and mounted his horse which another mounted constable was holding for him by the gate. When the noise of the hoofs had died away, Thady took Miss O'Bryan's hand, and kissed it. "Ah, Miss

Kate," he cried, "I would die for you any minute."

Nothing happened further just then; Andrew's body was still missing, when a car arrived one day from the station, six miles away. And the car contained no less a personage than Mr. Gagan, the Colonel's Dublin law agent, whose costs and charges had long contributed to the impoverishment of an overburdened estate. Still the lawyer was an old friend, and an ardent admirer of Kate, who ran to receive him with one of her old charming smiles; "But my father is too ill to see you, I fear; indeed, if the business is only more trouble, I think it would kill him on the spot."

"Ahem," said Mr. Gagan. "Well! the tidings I bring are sorrowful indeed; still he ought to know. His cousin Mike is dead—Mike O'Bryan, who was out in that misguided rising in 1848, when the police barracks were attacked and a policeman shot. 'Twas said that Mike fired the shot, and he was hiding here in the holes and corners of the old Castle, and your father risking his commission, and his life maybe, in harbouring the young rebel; and rowed Mike, with his own hands by creeks and gullies, that nobody knew but those two; aye, and took to the broad Atlantic in a little cockboat, and were picked up by an American steamer just in time. Aye, they were staunch friends those O'Bryans; and more to say that Mike never forgot his cousin, and was doing well in America—not a word to the Cornel, but I fear 'twas pigs! Anyhow, he's dead, poor boy! leaving neither wife nor child, but every penny to the Cornel. A hundred thousand dollars. Reckon that up, Miss O'Bryan."

So it was not for the Colonel after all that the Bell of St. Mary had been tolling, but for another of the old line who was dying thousands of miles away. The knowledge of this, and perhaps the comfort of knowing that he should leave Kate provided for anyhow, seemed to put the thought of dying out of the Colonel's head; and before long he could get out into the sunshine as the weather grew warmer, and presently took his rod in hand once more.

But poor Kate, when the first pleasant gleam of sunshine had passed, fell into a state of fixed despondency. Her father thought that love was at the bottom of it, and he even urged Mark Butler to come and see her. But she would have nothing

to say to Mark but the coldest civility; and as her father grew better and stronger she talked of making a retreat for awhile in the Convent at Mullingar. One thing that her father noticed was that the Scotch keeper's wife worried Kate a good deal, and yet she would never hear of the woman being sent away without seeing her. And, indeed, the woman's manner had changed a good deal of late. She was no longer subdued and deferential, but disposed to be threatening and exacting. One day after an interview with this woman, Kate came to her father and asked him to give her two hundred pounds, without asking her any questions. The Colonel was rather surprised, but gave the money without a word. All that went to Mrs. Andrew, who had made up her mind to emigrate and join a relative of hers in America.

All was ready for Mrs. Andrew's departure and her last visit was to the Castle, as she said, to say good-bye to Miss O'Bryan. Kate received her with touching humility. What she had done for this poor woman she felt was nothing in comparison with what she had robbed her of. She longed to tell her all and ask her forgiveness. The woman herself was softened at the feeling that Kate displayed, but she could not resist the temptation of delivering a final stroke.

"And now, Miss, as it will be cauld at say, mebbe ye will give me the plaid that ye have of my good man's?"

"Oh," cried Kate, turning deadly pale; "then you know all."

"Arrah then, honey," cried the woman, with a sudden merciful impulse; "so I do, and a deal more, blessed be the saints. It's gone to my heart to trouble you as I have done, but what was I to do? He would have it so."

"What do you mean?" gasped Kate. "Who is he?"

"Why, who but Andrew, who was drowned. Drown my Andrew! why, he is more skilful in the water than an eel! The minute your man threw him in, he saw what might be made of it; seeing, moreover, that he was behind-hand with the license money, and the receiver coming next day to gather it. What was it to hide among the bushes on the other side, and creep away and off to Dublin? 'Twas a week or more before he let me know, so I had my share of the trouble, Miss. And now I wish you every luck and happiness wid your sweetheart, for you'll never see Andrew and me any more."

The mind suddenly released from tension does not recover its balance all at once, and bright as matters now looked at Knockmagh, it was long before Kate's laugh was heard to ring as merrily as of old. As for Thady, he showed more indignation at having been taken in by the "scoundrel" of a water bailiff, than relief at the news of his safety. The Colonel was quite in the dark as to much that had happened during his illness, and one of the first enjoyments he promised himself out of his unexpected inheritance was a lawsuit with Sir William Butler about certain rights of turbary over a neighbouring bog that had long been a bone of contention between them. But Sir William proved unexpectedly complacent. He came in state with his wife to call at Knockmagh to congratulate the Colonel on his recovery, and to propose in form an alliance between the rival houses. The Colonel remembered Kate's declaration that she would never marry Mark, and was all the more ready to pronounce, that while he highly esteemed the honour of such an alliance—he would never think of putting any constraint upon his daughter's inclinations.

"Then I shall send Mark to plead his own cause," said the Baronet jovially.

Mark came like a whirlwind, and, as

soon as his horse's hoofs were heard in the avenue, the Colonel turned out with his rod along the river. He liked the lad well enough, and he would not like to see his dismal face as he went empty away. "Twill be a fine blow to those Butlers all the same," muttered the Colonel, making the best of the matter.

The Colonel stayed out three or four hours with little sport to speak of, the weather being bright and the water low. But coming back along the terrace, thinking that all the trouble would be over, he looked over the balustrade; and there, seated upon the steps by the river, were Kate and Mark as cosy as possible, she with a hand upon his shoulder, and he with an arm round her waist. The Colonel "hemmed" loudly, and Kate jumped up in confusion. "Ah, now, it's everywhere we've been looking for you, father dear, to give us your blessing, Mark and me. But I'm not going to leave you, for Mark is coming here to be your son and heir."

"And may ye live long and happy together!" cried the Colonel, his face working with emotion. "Aye, long after I'm sleeping in the old Abbey yard. And, Mark, if you treat her well, and live like a true O'Bryan, I wouldn't be surprised if in your last hours you'd be honoured by hearing the Knell of Knockmagh."

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